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ABSTRACT

This report describes an investigation of the types of additional instructional opportunities and remediation efforts provided by Minnesota schools and districts for students who do not initially meet basic skill requirements in reading and/or mathematics in eighth grade. Primary research questions included: What additional instructional opportunities did schools and districts offer for these students? and What are some of the ways in which Basic Standards legislation has altered education in Minnesota? Findings from interviews with educators show that schools and districts are placing an increased focus on the teaching and learning of basic skills and that they offer several categories of additional instruction to students. Study results show that schools and districts are working to help students master the reading and mathematics proficiencies tested on the Basic Skills tests. Data, however, are still lacking for evaluating the effectiveness of these opportunities. Further investigations could help schools and districts to identify the best way of assisting students experiencing difficulty in mastering basic skills in reading and mathematics, and permit schools and districts to address remediation issues from a position supported by solid data. An appendix contains the interview protocol, and eight tables describe remediation efforts implemented in different districts. (Contains 31 references.) (RT)

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Back to the Basics: An Investigation of School- and District-Level Remediation Efforts Associated With Minnesota's Basic Standards for High School Graduation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Back to the Basics: An Investigation of School- and District-Level Remediation Efforts Associated With Minnesota's Basic Standards for High School Graduation

In 1993, the Minnesota State Legislature passed into law a results-oriented Graduation Rule. One component of the Graduation Rule focuses on basic standards, which define the proficiencies in reading, mathematics, and writing that a student must possess before graduating from a Minnesota public high school. The reading and mathematics basic standards are measured by the administration of the Minnesota Basic Standards Tests (BSTs) beginning in 8th grade. All students in the Class of 2000 and beyond must pass both the reading BST and the mathematics BST before they can graduate from a Minnesota public high school.

The Graduation Rule fits into a larger context of implementing school reform through accountability practices. In Minnesota, the accountability component falls not only on students, but also on schools and districts because the results of the BSTs are published in local newspapers. The premise of the accountability movement is that if you hold people accountable, they will change their practices and policies in order to improve outcomes. In general, proponents of these types of proficiency testing programs argue that assessment programs drive school reform. The test is seen as the impetus for change, and schools can, and must because of the accountability component, accept the challenge to use the test as an impetus for change in order to improve learning and outcomes.

Because Minnesota schools are now more accountable to the public, educators face an increasing need to find ways for students to succeed. For students who have trouble passing the BSTs, policymakers state that "local districts offer a variety of services to students who do not pass the tests" (http://www.educ.state.mn.us). Using test scores, educators should make changes in order for students to achieve success. Thus, it is important to document what schools are doing to improve results and help students.

The purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth investigation of the types of additional instructional opportunities and remediation efforts that schools and districts in the state of Minnesota are providing for those students who do not initially meet the basic skill requirements in reading and/or mathematics in 8th grade. The primary research questions were the following:

- "What additional instructional opportunities are offered by schools and districts on behalf of students who do not meet the Minnesota basic standards in reading and mathematics in 8th grade (i.e., students who do not pass the reading BST or math BST in 8th grade)?"
- "What are some of the ways in which the Basic Standards have altered education in Minnesota?"

In this study, we focused on school- and district-level remediation efforts for students who fail the BSTs in 8th grade, rather than the responses that are occurring in elementary, middle, and junior high schools to prepare students for the BSTs. Interviews were conducted with educators in eight school districts around the state, which represented various geographical locations and district sizes. In the interviews, we asked about the types of responses and remediation efforts that the schools or districts have made with regard to the reading and math BSTs.

The interview data provided information not only about the types of additional instructional opportunities that schools and districts are offering to students who have yet to meet the basic skills requirements, but also

included insight and perspectives on other dimensions related to the BSTs. In terms of curricular responses to the BSTs, two findings emerged: (1) schools and districts are placing an increased focus on the teaching and learning of basic skills, and (2) schools and districts are offering several categories of additional instruction to students, which include:

(a) basic skills classes offered during the regular school day;
(b) remediation within regular classes—students are placed into these classes based on ability;
(c) a focus on reading and math across the curriculum;
(d) summer school programs;
(e) after-school and Saturday programs;
(f) resource rooms; and
(g) study packets.

Schools and districts are also experiencing several non-curricular implications related to the BSTs:

(a) the issue of student motivation, participation, and attendance in remedial programs;
(b) the issue of students who transfer into districts in their later school years;
(c) the issue of how to address both the high standards and the basic standards;
(d) administrative and organizational issues, such as hiring, scheduling, and transportation; and
(e) the issue of evaluating the effectiveness of these additional instructional opportunities.

This study demonstrates that schools and districts are working to help students master the reading and mathematics proficiencies tested on the BSTs. However, given the dearth of data evaluating the effectiveness of these opportunities, it is difficult to be certain which opportunities are most effective, under what circumstances, and for which students. Further investigations could help schools and districts to be able to correctly identify the best way of assisting students experiencing difficulty in mastering the basic skills in reading and mathematics, and will permit schools and districts to address remediation issues from a position supported by solid data.

Back to the Basics: An Investigation of School- and District-Level Remediation Efforts Associated With Minnesota's Basic Standards for High School Graduation

In 1993, the Minnesota State Legislature passed a law requiring the State Board of Education and the Department of Children, Families, & Learning (CFL) to develop a results-oriented Graduation Rule. One component of the Graduation Rule focuses on basic standards, which define the proficiencies in reading, mathematics, and writing that a student must possess before graduating from a Minnesota public high school. "The Basic Standards are a 'safety net' to make sure that no student graduates without learning the basic skills needed to live and work in today's society" (http://www.cfl.state.mn.us/GRAD/BasicInfo.htm). No longer would students be able to earn a high school diploma simply by attending classes for four years, without also being able to read, write, and solve basic math problems. Rather, students would have to demonstrate a minimum level of proficiency in reading, math, and writing on statewide tests of basic skills.

The premise of the accountability movement is that educational outcomes can be improved by holding schools and students accountable for specific learning tasks and standards. Policymakers and proponents of externally-mandated high school graduation tests such as the Minnesota Basic Standards Tests (BST's) use a number of interrelated arguments for instituting such testing programs. Advocates recommend them as a source of motivation for teachers and students; as a way to demonstrate that students have attained an agreed-upon level of knowledge or mastered a set of standards; and as a mechanism for keeping the public informed about students' and schools' performance relative to the standard.

Because Minnesota schools are now more accountable to the public, educators face an increasing need to find ways for students to succeed. Unfortunately, there are very few studies and reports about remediation efforts, and most describe remediation efforts associated with assessment programs from the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, Connell (1982), in her review of programs designed to help students master required proficiencies, wrote, "Good descriptive data about remedial services are rare" (p. 1). Archambault (1979) also stated that "...too little attention has been paid to and perhaps too little is known about effective means of remediating the learning problems of students failing the competency exams" (p. 32). Therefore, it is important to document what schools are doing to improve results and help students. This study investigated the school- and district-level remediation efforts implemented on behalf of students who do not meet the Minnesota basic standards in reading and math in 8th grade (i.e., students who do not pass the reading BST or math BST in 8th grade). The purpose of this study was to understand what types of interventions are being used by Minnesota school districts to help students pass the BSTs in reading and math. The primary research questions were the following:

- "What additional instructional opportunities are offered by schools and districts on behalf of students who do not meet the Minnesota basic standards in reading and math in 8th grade (i.e., students who do not pass the reading BST or math BST in 8th grade)?"
- "What are some of the ways in which the Basic Standards have altered education in Minnesota?"

Information on Minnesota's Basic Standards Tests

Students' reading and mathematics skills are measured by the Minnesota BSTs. Students take the BSTs in reading and math beginning in 8th grade, and all students in the Class of 2000 and beyond must pass both the reading BST and the math BST before they can graduate from high school.[1] Students' writing skills are

[1] In order to graduate from a Minnesota public high school, one of four designations must be noted on a student record: (1) Pass–state level (for a student who passes a basic requirement test under standard conditions or with an accommodation); (2) Pass–individual

measured by the Basic Standards Written Composition Test (administered to students beginning in 10th grade). All students in the Class of 2001 and beyond must pass the writing test in addition to the reading and math BSTs in order to graduate.

Students in the Class of 2000 first took the BSTs in February, 1996, during 8th grade. These students must achieve at least 70% correct on both the reading and math BSTs in order to receive a passing score and meet the basic standards requirements. Students in the Class of 2001 first took the BSTs in reading and math in February, 1997, during 8th grade, and the test of written composition in January, 1999 during 10th grade. These students must achieve at least 75% correct on both the reading and math BSTs, and score 3 or above on a 1–4 scale on the written composition test in order to meet basic standards requirements.[2] Students scoring below the passing level on any of the BSTs (reading, mathematics, or writing) must retake the test for the appropriate subject until the minimum passing criterion is met. Test retakes are administered in July and February of each subsequent year. For seniors who have not met the basic standards requirements, a retake administration is also available in April of the senior year.

Notification of Test Results and the State's Position on Remediation

Part of the legislation for the Minnesota Graduation Rule states that the results of the BSTs must be published, which adds an accountability component to the Graduation Rule. Subdivision 3 of Statute 121.1113 states, "the commissioner shall report test data publicly and to stakeholders" (http://www.educ.state.mn.us).

School districts are required to notify parents and the student in writing about basic skills test results no later than 90 days after the student takes the test (Part 3501.0120, Subp. 3 Notice of test results and remediation opportunities). If a student fails to meet the minimum requirements for passing, the BST score report provides information that can be used diagnostically. The letter may also contain information about remedial opportunities, because "schools must provide help for students who are unable to pass the tests" (http://www.cfl.state.mn.us/GRAD/faq.htm).

Part 3501.0140, subp. 2 states that all districts must file a basic requirement test administration plan, which includes information about the opportunities for remediation available to students who have yet to meet the basic requirements. [Note: these documents were not examined as part of this study.] Part 3501.0110 states: "A school district's curriculum shall include opportunities for all students to learn the basic requirements. At least two years before the anticipated date of the student's graduation, the district shall develop a plan for remediation for students who have not passed one or more basic requirements tests except for exempt students under part 3501.0090, subpart 1, item A, subitem (3)." Note that the plan required by the state may be developed for an individual student, or it may be a more general plan that details the opportunities for additional instruction available for any student not meeting the basic skills requirements.

Educators at CFL state quite plainly that it is not expected that every student will meet the basic skill require-

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level (for a student who passes a basic requirement test with a modification established in the IEP or section 504 accommodation plan); (3) Pass–translation (for a student who passes a basic requirement test that has been translated into a language other than English and has not been validated by the state as a state test with a set passing score); or (4) Exempt (for a student who has been exempted from a basic requirement test). For more information, see http://cfl.state.mn.us/GRAD/math_read_rule.htm.

[2] Note that individual school districts are allowed to set passing scores higher than the passing scores required by the state.

ments in reading and math during the initial BST administration in 8th grade:

> . . . most students, working at grade level or above, will pass the tests on their first try. Other students may need extra support and time to pass these tests. The state and local school districts are working together on strategies to help as many students as possible succeed, preferably on the first try. Teachers, parents and students are working together to make sure students are prepared for these tests. Still, some students do not pass on their first attempt. The state provides local school districts with detailed information on how each student did on the tests. This information can help teachers and parents identify specific areas where students may need extra help. Schools are providing students with a variety of courses and programs to help them succeed... (http://cfl.state.mn.us/GRAD/PgBSTreadmathresults.htm)

For those students having trouble passing any portion of the BSTs, policymakers recommend that school districts offer a variety of services to help these st idents achieve proficiency in reading, math, and writing. Using test scores, educators will make changes in order for students to achieve success. Thus, the purpose of this study was to describe the ways in which schools are responding to the needs of students who do not initially master the basic standards proficiencies. Policymakers further recommend that "the results of these tests can help school districts make decisions about what and how they teach" (http://www.educ.state.mn.us).

Some proponents of testing programs, such as the Minnesota Basic Standards testing program, argue that standards drive assessment programs and school reform. By providing information regarding whether the standards are being met, these types of tests and the standards they are designed to measure become an impetus for change. Schools can (and must, because of the accountability component) accept the challenge to use the standards as an impetus for change in order to improve learning and outcomes. By imposing some consequence in connection with test results (such as a high school diploma and publicly-reported results), the theory is that attention to the externally mandated standards will increase, ineffective practices will be identified and rectified, and in turn student achievement will increase (e.g., see Rodgers, Paredes, & Mangino, 1991).

According to information provided on the CFL website, Basic Standards Test results in Minnesota are used in the following ways:

- to measure the success of schools and districts in improving student achievement over time;
- to generate information for school improvement and accountability;
- to allow for identification of programming and strategies that work; and
- to allow for comparison of schools and districts in Minnesota.

Background Information on Remediation Programs

As part of this study, a literature review was conducted in order to find out what other states with assessment programs that use proficiency tests have learned about providing assistance to students who initially do not master the requirements. It was also useful to learn how other states have defined remediation.

Definitions

There are a variety of definitions and explanations available for the term remediation in the literature; for example, the term "implies a persistent reteaching of a single skill until mastery is demonstrated" (personal communication, January, 2000). Hoegl (1983) explained that remediation programs are a reiteration, or reteaching, of basic skills already presented to, but not learned by, students. In a report written for the state

of South Carolina (South Carolina State Department of Education, 1990), the authors specifically state that the purpose of their instructional assistance program is to overcome deficiencies identified by the South Carolina Exit Exam; that is, to prepare students to retake, and pass, the South Carolina Exit Exam.

In the *Indiana Basic Competency Skills Testing and Remediation Program Manual* (Indiana State Department of Education, 1985), a remedial program is defined as "...one which determines each student's knowledge deficiencies and provides instruction designed to assist students in overcoming the identified deficiencies. A remedial program includes three basic components: identification, diagnosis, and instruction" (p. 26). In support of the diagnostic aspect of remedial programs, Haney and Madaus (1978) cite the Education Commission of the States (ECS) recommendation that "diagnosis of learning problems of pupils who do not attain minimum standards and implementation of instructional programs that focus on their particular deficiencies should be components of any minimum competency testing program" (p. 477).

Serow, O'Neal, and Barnes (1980) point out that the type of remediation occurring in conjunction with the proficiency test movement is directly linked to the ideas of mastery learning (Bloom, 1968). Mastery learning proponents believe all students can attain mastery on a set of skills if given enough time and support. For the proficiency test movement, the criterion of mastery is a passing score on the proficiency test (in Minnesota, on the BSTs). For students who fail to initially master the criterion, a cycle of testing, instruction, and retesting will continue until mastery is demonstrated.

In 1986–1987, Marshall, Serow, and McCarthy (1987) conducted a survey of all 50 states in order to determine the number of states with proficiency testing programs and some common characteristics, if any, of those programs. Two of the common characteristics identified by Marshall et al. concerned remediation: (1) "...tests are administered at both elementary and secondary levels for the diagnosis of student deficiencies; students failing the test are provided with remediation" (p. v); and (2) "remediation efforts and procedures differ widely, and the benefits..." differ depending on a variety of student variables (p. v). The results of the survey also indicated that, of the states with proficiency testing programs, remediation of students who fail the test was required by over two-thirds of those states. This may be due, in part, to legal considerations.

Legal Considerations

According to Marshall, Serow, and McCarthy (1987), "most courts have agreed that students are entitled to remediation and the opportunity to retake the proficiency examination to demonstrate their competency. Indeed, if a student's deficiencies are identified and appropriate remediation is not provided, the grounds for a successful instructional negligence suit may be strengthened" (pp. 23-24). Hoegl (1983) also noted that when performance on proficiency tests such as the Minnesota BSTs is tied to a high school diploma or some other academic advancement, "legal restrictions on the use of [proficiency tests] relating to due process also include the opportunity for remediation" (p. 53). Thus, school districts and state agencies may avoid lawsuits by providing additional instructional opportunities and allowing students to retake the proficiency tests.

A report on the technical aspects of the Alabama state assessment program (Hess, 1985) states that "when a state or a district requires the passing of a test for high school graduation, the state or district assumes certain obligations to its students, teachers, and administrators as a result of that requirement. Every opportunity must be given to students to allow them to acquire the skills needed to meet the standards that are established... After the test has been administered and student deficiencies identified then remedial activities must provide students with instruction on these deficiencies. Every effort must be made and documented to assist a student in meeting the criteria required for the diploma" (p. 5).

Components of Remediation Programs

Several reports and articles reviewed for this study provided information about how to develop a remediation

program and about what characteristics of those programs have been found to be useful and effective in helping students master proficiency requirements. Most of these articles did not use empirically-based methods to investigate which types of remediation programs were most effective in raising proficiency test pass rates, but rather contain suggestions on what "seems" to have worked best in remediation programs.

For example, the Texas Education Agency (http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/results/studies/remedtn.htm) assembled a committee composed of educators from those schools that demonstrated the greatest average scale score gains between a spring and summer administration of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). These educators were asked to describe their summer remediation programs and what they believed made the programs successful in promoting student success on the proficiency test. The educators agreed that "comprehensive planning, knowledge of pedagogy, and 'knowing who your students are' are all vital elements in an effective program." Another component included allowing teachers the freedom to design programs for the specific students in their classes. "In most cases teachers were under few constraints and were given a free hand to design and implement strategies that matched teaching styles to learning styles and met the specific needs of the students."

The Texas educators discussed a variety of motivational techniques that were used for both teachers and students in these summer remediation programs. In one program, teachers were paid $30 for each student who passed the test; in another, students were paid an hourly wage for attending the program. Other programs gave small prizes for attendance, used classroom decorations and banners with motivational themes, and so forth: Some teachers telephoned students to "encourage attendance at classes" and to offer support before the test. Clearly, student (and teacher) motivation, participation, and attendance posed problems for these remediation efforts.

These educators created the following list of instructional techniques and organizational considerations, which they suggest are important when designing and implementing a remediation program:

- Focus on teaching rather than reviewing. Don't take prior knowledge for granted. Start from "square one."
- Model thinking processes for students. Model the notion that learning is fun and enjoyable.
- Make use of performance data to identify your students' needs.
- Group students with similar weaknesses and/or similar strengths.
- Design instruction according to students' needs. Recognize different learning styles. Match teaching styles to learning styles.
- Make use of peer evaluation and group work to improve students' skills.
- Encourage direct parental involvement.
- Schedule programs so that they end immediately before testing.
- Have teachers serve as test administrators for their students.
- Make students responsible for their own success plan (student/teacher contracts).
- Make connections for students between instruction and the test.
- Put test in the proper perspective to lower test anxiety.
- Integrate activities across subject areas.
- Have students maintain a portfolio system to foster self-assessment and self-esteem.
- Teach concrete ideas before moving to abstract ideas.
- Break concepts down into small, manageable pieces instead of tackling them as a whole.
- Focus on test-taking skills such as underlining, circling, and highlighting important information.

- Focus on content, purpose, and structure of the written composition rather than on mechanics.
- Use color-coded writing in drafting compositions (e.g., reasons, explanations, and details in different colors).
- Teach editing skills in context (e.g., student-generated writing and newspaper articles).
- Make extensive use of hands-on activities (e.g., use food to teach measurement and fractions; cut, construct, and measure to teach geometry).
- Have students justify correct multiple-choice answers and explain why the other options are incorrect.

These educators also offered some suggestions on what NOT to do when implementing a remediation program:

- Don't "drill and kill."
- Don't spend too much time on one thing.
- Don't use "classic" cooperative learning.
- Don't give up on student attendance.
- Don't allow students to harbor a sense of failure.
- Don't grade daily work.
- Don't destroy rhythm or momentum.
- Don't be haphazard in grouping students.
- Don't merely review; instead, instruct.

Although the above lists and suggestions generated by these Texas educators are quite comprehensive, there are several limitations to consider. First, the only evidence as to the effectiveness of these ideas is that these educators represented the districts with the greatest average scale score gains between a spring and summer administration of the TAAS; that is, no empirical studies were conducted to determine which of the above components were responsible for these scale score gain The second limitation is that no explanatory information was provided for *why* these suggestions are successful in helping students improve their scores on a proficiency test. For example, why is it that one should not use "classic" cooperative learning, or grade daily work?

As in the case of Texas, New Jersey educators also found student motivation, participation, and attendance to be barriers to serving students in a remedial summer school program. Thus, "in preparation for the mandatory administration of the New Jersey High School Proficiency Test (HSPT) that was to begin with 9th graders in 1986, a pilot program was conducted with 9th graders who had done poorly on the HSPT during its second, non-mandatory administration in 1985" (Merkel-Keller, 1987, abstract). The pilot program was called the Summer Work Study Vocational Program. The premise of the Summer Work Study Vocational Program was that combining intensive summer intervention on the basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics with paid employment would increase the likelihood of these students regularly attending summer school (or even agreeing to attend in the first place), which would then lead to higher passing rates on the 1986 HSPT.

Students received one hour of intensive remedial instruction in each of the three subject areas (reading, writing, and mathematics) for a total of three hours each morning. Students then had lunch and spent three hours in the afternoon at a minimum wage job. One hundred twenty-five 9th grade vocational students (entering 10th grade in the fall) from five urban districts in New Jersey were selected to participate in the summer program. Eighty students fulfilled the obligations of the program, one of which was attending 25

out of 30 days, and were included in the posttesting. The percentage of students who improved their scores on the HSPT ranged from 45% on the writing test, to 71% on the reading test, to 78% on the mathematics test. Thus, Merkel-Keller (1987) concluded that the program should be offered each summer; however, she did suggest some program modifications to improve both attendance and test score gains.

In this article, Merkel-Keller (1987) also provides the management plan used to implement the Summer Work Study Vocational Program, including how to develop the vocational, guidance, curriculum, and training components for the program (such as hiring and training staff, identifying summer employment opportunities for the students, evaluating the program, budgetary needs, and so forth). Thus, someone interested in developing a program like this should consult the Merkel-Keller article.

The Indiana Basic Competency Skills Testing and Remediation Program Manual (Indiana State Department of Education, 1985, pp. 26-33) provides information on:

1. **The process of designing remedial programs** (define the skills to be taught, identify the students to be served, compute available dollars to be received to supplement the existing program, state the objectives of the program, determine the instructional components, identify the diagnostic procedures to be used, identify personnel needs, develop the in-service component, identify instructional materials needed, develop an evaluation plan);
2. **The components of a remedial program** (identification, diagnosis, instruction);
3. **Alternative models for remedial programs** (design a new program; combine with existing special and summer school programs; use available reading, language arts, and mathematics specialists; remediate within the regular classroom with the regular teacher; use tutors; use aides or volunteers; use computer-assisted instruction);
4. **The characteristics of remedial programs** (use the six steps in the diagnostic-prescriptive teaching process; use ongoing evaluative procedures; specify learner objectives; provide appropriate, sequential instructional activities and materials; present skills in the context of the subject area; use materials that support the defined curriculum; and consider individual differences).

The North Carolina Instructional Services Division (Gallagher & Ramsbotham, 1978, as cited in Archambault, 1979) provided the following suggestions to schools and districts regarding possible ways to provide additional instructional assistance to students:

> [They suggest that the] components of such plans might include: reorganization, such as changing existing courses or developing new ways of teaching and new places for learning; summer workshops to improve teachers' skills in remedial programs....Possible ways to offer remedial programs might be through smaller classes, summer programs, community agency programs, essential-skills labs, extended-day programs, tutorial programs, using student teachers, take-home programs, differentiated assignments, and hiring more teacher aides. (pp. 13-14)

For more information on other remediation efforts, see the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory's website (http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/cntareas/math/ma6remed.htm); Price, Price, Holland, and Mann (1990) for a description of a middle school remediation program; and Richman and Brown (1986) for their study on the impact of three different remediation programs on students' success on the test and their self-esteem.

Types of Remediation Programs

A few researchers have conducted studies similar to the study conducted here; that is, they have investigated what types of remediation programs are provided to students and how the remedial services are offered. For

example, Strang (1981) identified 13 states with proficiency testing programs (Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, Vermont, and Virginia) in order to obtain information on the types of remediation, if any, being provided to students who do not initially meet the criterion for each state's proficiency testing program.

Strang (1981) conducted in-person or telephone interviews with state and district personnel in each of the 13 identified states and found that remedial services were available for students who did not initially master the proficiencies in all of the districts included in his study. Some of the states required that schools and districts offer additional instructional opportunities to students in order to help them master the proficiencies, other states did not require this. However, whether providing remedial programs is required by a state or not, a common theme across all of these states was that the actual design and implementation of remedial services was left up to the discretion and responsibility of schools and districts. By examining the types of additional instructional opportunities offered across the 13 states, the following salient features were identified.

When does the additional instructional assistance occur? Strang (1981) found that remedial programs in these 13 states were offered during the regular school day, during after-school hours, or during summer school. Note that there are several implications for students depending on when these opportunities are available. For example, the Florida educators interviewed by Strang (1981) stated that students prefer after-school programs so that they do not have to miss out on other electives; that is, rather than taking a remedial math class during the day in place of a graphic arts class, for example, students would prefer to stay after school for the additional assistance they need in math. However, offering this additional assistance after school or during the summer results in a longer school day or longer school year only for those students struggling to meet the minimum proficiencies tested.

What types of programs are offered during these times? Schools and districts differed in the way that additional instructional assistance was provided to students during the day. That is, some schools used in-school pull-out programs, some offered remediation within the regular classroom setting, some schools offered subject area courses (such as English 10) using ability grouping methods, and some schools developed basic skills courses (i.e., courses in which the curriculum is designed specifically for helping the student master the basic skills tested in that subject area). Most schools allowed students to continue to enroll in basic skills courses until they passed the proficiency test in that subject area. Schools and districts differed, however, on whether students received elective credit or subject area credit for these basic skills courses.

Many schools and districts also made resource rooms staffed by teachers available to students both during and after school. The after-school and summer school programs were specifically geared toward helping students pass the proficiency test; thus, they resembled the basic skills courses offered by some schools and districts during the school day.

What is the mode of delivery? Additional instructional assistance was provided by paid or volunteer tutors, regular classroom teachers, remedial teachers (e.g., reading and math specialists), computers, and study packets (for teachers and for students). Note that the study packets for teachers were intended as instructional guides and were tied to the test objectives.

What are some standard components of this additional assistance? These opportunities generally targeted test-taking skills and content that would help the students pass the proficiency test (i.e., the specific reading, writing, or mathematics skills tested by the proficiency test were targeted, rather than using a more general approach of improving students' overall reading, writing, or mathematics abilities). There was also a focus on using individualized instruction, one-on-one instruction, small-group work, and smaller class sizes.

Archambault (1979) hypothesized that remediation programs designed to help students pass a proficiency

test will resemble those programs designed for Title I. "Remediation programs modeled after Title I will be likely to include one or more of the following characteristics. First, students will receive more individualized attention than in their regular instructional program. Second, instruction will be offered in smaller groups. Third, it will most likely be provided in a specially designed area away from the regular classroom. Fourth, it will most likely be provided by content specialists rather than by regular classroom teachers or by teacher aides" (p. 40).

Several states also required that schools and districts complete an individualized learning plan (ILP) for any student who does not initially master a proficiency test. The ILP specifies the types of additional instructional assistance that a student will receive, whether it be after-school cram sessions, visiting a resource room, enrolling in a basic skills course, and so forth.

Is the remedial opportunity mandatory or optional? Some schools required that students who did not initially master the proficiencies enroll in some type of remedial program, others left it up to the discretion of the student and/or the student's parents.

How are schools and districts staffing these efforts? Some schools and districts hired remedial and subject area teachers to teach remedial courses and to serve as a resource for other teachers in the building; for example, schools in Virginia, New Jersey, and Delaware added reading and math specialists to teach basic skills courses or to provide small-group, pull-out instruction for students. Tutors and aides were hired in some schools and districts to staff resource rooms and to help in after-school programs. Other schools and districts reassigned staff so that basic skills courses could be offered to those students needing additional assistance.

What type of data is available on the effectiveness of these programs? Strang (1981) found that although the educators interviewed could describe the types of remediation available for students, "information was not available in most districts…to judge whether all students needing help were receiving it nor to estimate the effectiveness of the remedial services" (p. v).

Although Strang's (1981) study did investigate the remediation programs in 13 states with proficiency testing programs, several other studies have been conducted since then in other states. For example, Davidson (1982) surveyed Alabama superintendents about the remediation plans being implemented in their districts following the introduction of the Alabama Basic Competency Tests and placed the types of additional assistance programs being implemented into the following seven categories:

- regular classroom (i.e., remediation occurs within the regular classroom setting);
- basic skills classes (i.e., students are provided with extra help in a special class);
- ability grouping (i.e., classes are ordered from a basic level of knowledge to a higher level of knowledge and students needing remediation would be placed into a basic level course);
- competency stress periods (i.e., periods of time devoted to reviewing basic skills, such as after-school test "warm-up" activities);
- Chapter I and II;
- team teaching; and
- use of computers. (pp. 1-2)

To summarize, Alabama educators offered remedial programs at a variety of times (i.e., during the day and after school) and using different modes of delivery (i.e., computers and specialized teachers). Again, schools and districts differed in the way that additional instructional assistance was provided to students during the

day; that is, some schools offered remediation within the regular classroom setting, some schools used ability grouping methods, and some schools developed basic skills courses.

In a study by the Ohio Legislative Office of Education Oversight (1993), researchers conducted both phone interviews with parents and other community stakeholders and focus groups with students to determine the types of additional instruction being offered to students. They found that although all respondents reported that some type of additional instruction was being provided to students, the types of instructional efforts varied widely among school districts. The efforts most frequently reported include the following:

- before- or after-school subject remediation;
- study hall subject remediation;
- weekend classes, both in subject matter and test-taking skills;
- summer classes, both optional and mandatory;
- required courses scheduled during regular school days;
- community-assisted tutoring and tutoring by teachers; and
- computerized assistance and learning packets. (p. 17)

In summary, schools in Ohio offered mandatory and optional instruction at a variety of times (i.e., before school, after school, on weekends, during the summer, and during the regular school day) and using several modes of delivery (i.e., teachers, tutors, computers, and study packets). Instruction covered both test content and test-taking skills. Unfortunately, the report did not include any information as to which of the above opportunities proved to be most effective in helping students to master the required proficiencies.

More recently, Grant (2000) conducted focus groups with elementary and secondary school teachers in New York state regarding their perceptions of the responses that schools and districts have made to state-level testing. With regard to remediation, the teachers stated that there was "...an increased emphasis on remediation as a way to deal with low test scores" (p. 16). The teachers also described the approaches to remediation, which "...included additional classes designed for students presumably at risk of failing, summer and Saturday test review courses, hiring additional teachers and aides to staff learning labs where students could either come voluntarily or by teacher assignment, and reassigning teachers to classes of students based on their perceived ability to help those students pass the exam" (p. 16).

Thus, schools and districts in other states that have instituted basic standards testing programs have developed a variety of remediation opportunities for students who do not initially meet the required proficiency level. This study investigated what types of remediation opportunities Minnesota schools and districts are offering to their students who do not initially meet the basic standards in 8th grade.

METHODOLOGY

This study primarily investigated how Minnesota schools or districts have changed their educational programs in order to meet the needs of students who did not meet the basic standards in 8th grade. In order to limit the scope of the study, the ways in which elementary, middle, and junior high schools are changing instruction, curriculum, and so forth to *prepare* students for the BSTs were not specifically investigated. However, some of the interview respondents provided that type of information; thus, when appropriate, information on how students are prepared for the BSTs will be discussed.

Also, this research did not focus on the writing requirement. The first reason for this is that most school districts had very high passing rates for the writing requirement and have reported very little need to

remediate students in writing. Second, since the first administration of the writing BST occurred last year, most schools have not yet developed any remediation activities for students who did not meet the minimum criteria in writing.

The Sites and Respondents

The primary research questions were the following:

- "What additional instructional opportunities are offered by schools and districts on behalf of students who do not meet the Minnesota basic standards in reading and math in 8th grade (i.e., students who do not pass the reading BST or math BST in 8th grade)?"
- "What are some of the ways in which the Basic Standards have altered education in Minnesota?"

In order to answer these research questions, interviews were conducted with key personnel in several school districts around the state. A convenience sample of eight school districts was selected for this study. These districts represented various geographical locations and district sizes throughout the state of Minnesota. The eight districts included four metro districts and four non-metro districts and are labeled as follows:

- District A: Metro
- District B: Metro
- District C: Metro
- District D: Metro
- District E: Non-metro
- District F: Non-metro
- District G: Non-metro
- District H: Non-metro

Within each of these eight school districts, the interview respondents were sampled purposefully, and included key people at both the district- and school-level. Key people were educators who could provide detailed information about the school-level and district-level remediation opportunities being offered to students who do not initially receive a passing score on the BSTs. Principals, department heads, and school counselors would be considered key people in the schools, and the curriculum coordinator for the district would be considered a key person at the district level. In most districts, principals or curriculum coordinators were interviewed; however, the person actually interviewed varied by site. Because District B served as a pilot site for this study, a greater number and a wider variety of people were interviewed. For example, in District B, at the district level, key people from the following areas were interviewed—teaching and learning, district curriculum specialists, limited English proficiency, special education, student services/minority populations, and research and evaluation. At the school level, principals, counselors, and/or teachers were interviewed.

The Interview Instrument

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the types of additional instructional opportunities that schools are offering throughout the state of Minnesota, a qualitative methodology was used. Qualitative methods provide a rich, holistic description and analysis of a phenomenon. Interviews were chosen as the data collection method because they are useful for obtaining information that may be difficult to directly observe, such as class scheduling, and for finding out "what is 'in and on someone's mind'" (Merriam, 1988, p. 72). Because we did not want to limit the production of ideas from the interviewees, an open-ended, semi-structured interview protocol was used (see Appendix A).

In the interviews, respondents were asked about the types of additional instructional opportunities that the schools or districts are offering to students who do not meet the basic skill requirements in reading or math during the initial administration of the BSTs in 8th grade. The focus of the study included: (1) interviewees'

perceptions of how the district or schools had changed since the introduction of the BSTs, and (2) current and/or future remediation efforts needed as a result of the BSTs.

Interviewees were asked about the types of remediation efforts available in their district or their schools. For example, they were asked about changes in school-day and school-year restructuring efforts (e.g., adding after-school or summer school programs), changes in school organization and administrative practices (e.g., changes in course offerings, altering of student placement policies), and changes in instructional opportunities. For each specific response mentioned by a respondent, follow-up questions were asked in order to gain further understanding of the response, such as (1) who qualifies for those opportunities? (2) how are students selected for these opportunities? and (3) when are these opportunities offered (i.e., during regular school hours, in after-school or summer school programs)?

After completing each interview, the audiotape of the interview was transcribed and field notes were added. During the data analysis process, which included listening to the tapes and reading the interview transcriptions (several times each), four overarching themes emerged: (1) curricular and instructional response; and (2) non-curricular response

FINDINGS

As mentioned above, the interview data provided information not only about the types of additional instructional opportunities that schools and districts are offering to students who have yet to meet the basic skills requirements, but also included insight and perspectives on other dimensions related to the BSTs. In terms of curricular responses to the BSTs, two findings emerged: (1) schools and districts are placing an increased focus on the teaching and learning of basic skills, and (2) schools and districts are offering a variety of additional instructional opportunities. However, schools and districts are also experiencing several non-curricular implications related to the BSTs:

- The issue of student motivation, participation, and attendance in remedial programs;
- The issue of students who transfer into districts in their later school years;
- The issue of how to address both the high standards and the basic standards;
- Administrative and organizational issues, such as hiring, scheduling, and transportation; and
- The issue of evaluating the effectiveness of these additional instructional opportunities

Curricular/Instructional Responses

Increased Focus on Basic Skills

As mentioned above, one of the premises of adopting state-wide assessment programs that use proficiency tests is that attention to the standards will increase as a result of testing. The comments of the educators interviewed for this study supported this contention. Every educator with whom we spoke commented on how the BSTs have caused people to focus on the basic skills tested by the BSTs. One educator explained, "We are more focused now. We have a purpose." In an article in the *Star Tribune* (Duchesne, 2000, February 7), Don Pasco, the District Assessment Coordinator from the Osseo school district, was quoted as saying, "The most positive thing it has done is that it has focused our efforts as a district, it has focused many of the students on making sure they have those skills" (p. 2).

In general, the educators in this study felt that one of the most positive aspects of the adoption and implementation of Minnesota's basic standards testing policy is that it has served to highlight the needs of some

students who otherwise may have "slipped through the cracks." Although some of the educators interviewed had been concerned about these at-risk students all along, they attributed the increased attention educators were giving to the development of basic skills in these students to the adoption of the basic standards testing policy. One principal stated that the test has forced them to "look more at remediation than in years past." He said they now "look at the skills students must have and design courses appropriately." The district curriculum specialist in reading remarked that this policy has forced the district to focus on the needs of certain students, as well as on the importance of reading in general for all students. Other comments include the following:

- "We have a Basic Skills Committee now that meets several times a year and has reps from different parts of the district and grade levels and we talk about how we're doing with this. That would not be occurring without the test. So, it just gives us a framework to keep looking at our results."

- "I think we've changed in several ways. One, we certainly have become more focused on the instructional areas particularly connected to the basic standards tests—the math, reading and now most recently the writing…Are we targeting instruction to provide students with certain basic skills? To a greater extent, we certainly are doing that. And are those skills important? They are important life skills…I think it's caused us to sharpen our instruction, to look more critically at what we're doing and to be held accountable. It's a high accountability, high-stakes kind of test and we have to rise to meet the challenge. We wouldn't be doing that if we didn't have the test."

- "It has sparked a discussion amongst all different types of educators in each building from the paraprofessional to the principal and obviously with the teachers and I think even the custodians are well aware of this. People are talking about 'how are we delivering education to students?' and 'what can we do differently or what do we need to do more of to help students be more successful?'"

- "The district—everyone knows it's here, everyone is very serious about the fact that our scores need to improve… the seriousness of this whole thing has really shown with everybody—from year 1 to year 2 the kids taking the test, you could see the difference in the kids. The first year it was like 'oh, this doesn't mean anything.' Then when I told them that they would be in a specific reading class because they didn't pass or a specific math class, because we had them set up already, then boy we got serious really fast…"

- "…It made my high school teachers realize the importance of reading and math… They are so content driven… They go to school to become a content teacher… I like the fact that they are now becoming reading teachers in their content areas."

- "As far as high schools are concerned, they're just more aware of it. There's a lot more reading intervention going on than in the past, reading classes and those kinds of things, and the same with math now, too."

- "Since the introduction of the Basic Standards Tests, we have, in our 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th grades put more emphasis on basic standards, reading, writing and mathematics. I think we always thought we were doing that, because as our kids moved into 9th grade, they took math courses, they took English courses, we thought they were doing sufficient reading and writing in all their content areas, but because we had, at least initially, significant numbers of students who did not pass the test in 8th grade, we've had to revamp, we've had to refocus, and we've had to really look at the basics and how we are teaching them, not only at 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th grade, but our preparation K–12, our prepara-

tion—strong reading, writing, math program K–5 that feeds into the 6–8 program, that then is an aligned, coordinated curriculum, emphasizing basics, so students certainly have them."

- "Let me just say up front, because I have a real bias, that the Basic Skills Test has had mainly positive results. And not because of what we have to do to remediate, although that's very important, but just because of the fact that now that they exist it gives the system an incentive and a kick in the pants to start working very, very early on preventing kids from getting into problems with basic skills to begin with. And that's something that, for all of its imperfections, if you take it away, you take away that kick in the pants, the prevention piece that's so important."

- "Yes, I do. There's more of a focus, more of a direction, more of a concern about kids slipping through the cracks, there's more of an awareness that you just can't pass kids on, that the 8th grade basic standards test are not an 8th grade issue, they're not a senior issue, but they're a kindergarten issue. When we talk about graduation standards, part of which is the basic standards, kindergarten teachers are talking about graduation standards, and that is better because in the past we didn't have that kind of investment or that kind of vision that what I'm doing now impacts what happens later. We all knew that, kind of, but we have more of a bringing together the K–12 staff. It's more of a team, we're all in this together."

- "We have really undergone, I would say, a total curricular review beginning with the primary grades up through 8th grade and then into high school for remedial efforts for those students who don't pass it at the 8th grade level. We've really done a curricular review to see how we can supplement what we're doing, how we can improve what we're doing, how we can provide for instruction during the day, whether it's remedial instruction, tutorial kinds of instruction, assessing the curriculum to make sure that we are helping students learn what they need to learn in order to pass the tests."

- "And I think that what we're doing for prevention in the district is much more important and effective, actually, than the remediation. . ."

As the above quotes suggest, the focus on basic skills has occurred throughout the K–12 curriculum and has also sparked discussions about, and activity toward, aligning the K–12 curriculum. Several people interviewed stressed the preventive things they are doing because, as one educator remarked, "Our hope is that we're out of this business" of remediating students. Another person commented, "Our goal is for better preparation, then we won't need remediation." Finally, another person stated, "I really think that what happens with prevention is really more important and would be the saddest thing to lose. It would do us more damage than remediation, because after all it's much more difficult and inefficient and painful to remediate children than it is to prevent them from getting into trouble."

Prevention Activities

Although the focus of this study did not extend throughout the K–12 curriculum, a brief discussion of the types of prevention activities occurring in the eight districts represented here is warranted. Perhaps the most prevalent prevention activity that schools and districts have undertaken so far is a K–12 curricular alignment. Standardization of curriculum is also occurring across schools within a district: "As a district, we want to bring all of that together and focus, so that you get the same content standards and the opportunity to try a variety of assessments, no matter where you go to school." Other prevention activities include the following:

- Several districts have focused on implementing an aligned reading program—some have aligned the reading curriculum throughout the entire K–12 curriculum, others have focused on K–5, K–6, or

K–8. One district has also developed a K–2 Early Literacy Assessment that teachers will administer throughout the school year. Another educator stated, "We are stressing nonfiction literature starting in elementary school."

- One district is focusing on the six-trait writing process throughout the K–12 curriculum. "We start in kindergarten teaching the six traits and we emphasize that every year." The six traits include (1) ideas and content, (2) organization, (3) voice, (4) word choice, (5) sentence fluency, and (6) conventions (see http://sun.kent.wednet.edu/staff/creed/index.html). Another district has developed two writing rubrics—one for the elementary level and one for the middle/high school level. These rubrics are used to score the district writing assessment, but perhaps more importantly are used as a way to help teachers teach writing. In addition to the rubrics, writing guidelines have been developed for students at all grade levels, which highlight the components of good writing.

- Several districts have developed math study packets for teachers and students. One district has made resource notebooks available for teachers. These resource notebooks contain research-based information on best practice, supplemental worksheets, pretests, and performance assessment ideas. Several districts have developed readiness (grades 2–7) and remediation packages for students. These packages contain practice tests, worksheets, and vocabulary for each of the eight strands on the math BST.

- Some schools and districts have increased the focus on parent involvement: "We've really focused on parent involvement, more parents involved in education." They have done this, for example, by encouraging parents to attend parent-teacher conferences and by providing tips for parents on how to help their children succeed in school. Another district has focused on early childhood literacy programs from birth to grade 3. In these programs, books are made more readily available to parents, and parents are provided with information about the importance of reading to children in the early years.

- In many elementary schools, teachers must spend two hours per day on reading/language arts instruction and one hour per day on math instruction. One district has introduced a K–2 summer school for students who are reading behind grade level. At another site, one of the district administrators emphasized that there has been "an increased focus on reading and literacy in the elementary schools" and that "many elementary schools are adding reading specialists to their staff."

- In middle schools, students considered at risk of not passing the BSTs may be placed in a study skills class that focuses on the basic skills in math or reading. Students take practice tests at the beginning of 8th grade, and teachers review key concepts. There is a focus on reading across the curriculum, particularly non-fiction reading. Many middle schools have incorporated time into the daily schedule for independent reading (e.g., 20 minutes a day during a homeroom period). The math and reading/language arts departments in one middle school use the information from a district-level achievement test to "see where the holes are, the deficiencies and then work with those students in 7th and 8th grade."

In a separate report, *Measuring Up*, published by the Minneapolis Foundation, the Minneapolis Public Schools, and the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce (2000), the preventive activities occurring in the Minneapolis Public Schools are highlighted. For example, Minneapolis has implemented a standard reading and math curriculum:

> The district has stepped up the emphasis on reading by implementing consistent reading programs at all elementary and middle schools and selecting a supplemental reading program for high school students who have not yet passed the Basic Standards reading test. The district also increased the focus on the math program to make it consistent throughout the district. (p. 23)

Thus, although the focus of this study is on the opportunities available for students who do not meet the basic skills requirements during the initial administration of the BSTs in 8th grade, the interview respondents also provided information about the variety of instructional efforts extending throughout the K–12 curriculum.

Types of Opportunities for Additional Instruction

Tables 1–8 show the variety, and similarity, of the additional instructional opportunities offered by the eight districts represented in this study. These schools and districts are implementing similar types of opportunities and programs for the students who need additional time and attention on the basic skill proficiencies tested by the BSTs. Although there is variety in *when* these opportunities are offered (e.g., during the day, after school, or in summer school), the educators interviewed all stated that the purpose of these opportunities was to help the students gain the necessary skills in math and/or reading to pass the BSTs.

One educator stated, "The curriculum in the basic skills classes includes…practice tests, practice materials, materials that have been targeted to help students be successful…the bottom line is we don't want to range all over the world teaching students about reading. This is a very specific type of reading…and we target the instruction to help the students pass the test." Educators are using a variety of instructional approaches to help students attain the basic skills in reading and/or math, such as direct instruction, computer-aided instruction, or focusing on specific math (i.e., the eight strands) or reading skills (such as decoding, comprehension, vocabulary). The educators in the schools and districts represented here mentioned the following instructional materials—these are materials that they are either using or have heard others are using:[3,4]

MATHEMATICS

- St. Paul Public Schools Basic Standards Mathematics Curriculum—*Test Tactics* (call Dick Milles at 651-793-5525)
- *Passing the Minnesota Basic Standards Test in Math* by F. Pintozzi & D. Pintozzi (American Book Company, 1-888-264-5877 or http://www.americanbookcompany.com)
- Saxon Math (http://www.saxonpub.com)
- IMP (Integrated Math Program)
- CMP (Connected Math Program) / Core Plus (http://www.wmich.edu/cpmp)

WRITING

- Six-Trait Writing Process (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, http://sun.kent.wednet.edu/staff/creed/index.html)

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[3] For further information about the any of the following materials or other "best practice" ideas, please contact the Best Practices Network at CFL (http://cfl.state.mn.us/bestpractice/BestPractices.htm). For math, call Sharon Stenglein at 651-582-8759 (http://cfl.state.mn.us/bestpractice/BPMath.htm); for reading, call Al Greenfield at 651-582-8785 (http://cfl.state.mn.us/bestpractice/BPReading.htm); and for writing, call (no name provided) 651-582-8763 (http://cfl.state.mn.us/bestpractice/BPWriting.htm).

[4] Note that only a cursory discussion of the instructional approaches and materials being used in these remedial opportunities is presented here because this study did not focus specifically on curriculum and instruction. It would only be appropriate to discuss those in more detail if we had conducted in-class observations of these additional instructional opportunities.

READING

- Accelerated Reader (http://www.advlearn.com/ar/default.htm)
- CCC (Computer Curriculum Corporation; http://www.cccleam.com)
- Josten's Ideal Learning
- Using discourse labs already in place in classrooms
- Language
- SRA/McGraw Hill (e.g., direct instruction products, such as Corrective Reading; http://www.sra4kids.com/teacher/index.html)
- Strategies for Teaching Reading Program (STRP)
- Jamestown Reading Series (http://www.jamestownpub.com)
- *Passing the Minnesota Basic Standards Test in Reading* by F. Pintozzi & D. Pintozzi (American Book Company, 1-888-264-5877 or http://www.americanbookcompany.com)

GENERAL

- *Guide to the Minnesota Basic Standards Test: Practice Makes Perfect,* published jointly by the Saint Paul Public Schools and Minneapolis Public Schools (for more information, call 651-767-8100 or 612-668-0000)

Mode of Delivery

The information provided by interview respondents about the types of additional instructional opportunities being offered to students who do not meet the basic requirements in reading and/or math during the initial administration of the BSTs was analyzed, and a list of categories of the types of remediation being provided was developed. Seven categories of responses emerged:

- basic skills classes offered during the regular school day;
- remediation within regular classes—students are placed into these classes based on ability;
- a focus on reading and math across the curriculum;
- summer school programs;
- after-school and Saturday programs;
- resource rooms; and
- study packets.

As one educator noted, "our objective was to get every student access to the development they needed. So we offer during the day, after-school, summer school" programs.

Basic skills classes. Basic skills classes are offered and designed specifically to help students improve their proficiencies in reading and/or math and to pass the BSTs. These courses are offered during the regular school day. A variety of instructional approaches are used in these basic skills courses and might include direct instruction, small-group work, or computer-aided instruction. As mentioned above, a variety of curricular materials are used. One educator stated, "one of the things we find in remediation is that to just learn it again the same way isn't as effective. Students need variety. . .and if they can focus on basic skill development through some technology and through some instruction and interaction with the instructor, we find that's a nice combination."

No matter what type of instructional approach or curricular material is used, however, these courses all emphasize basic skill development. Because the students enrolling in basic skills courses typically have very

different ability levels and skill needs, these courses use individualized instruction within the classroom. Thus, students can continue to enroll in basic skills courses (for several trimesters, semesters, or school years) until they have demonstrated mastery on the BSTs. Although they will continue to work on the skills they need, the skill books, readings, and so forth will change. Three educators described the basic skills classes offered in their high schools:

- "I'd say there's a really good blend between trying to develop the student's overall reading and math skills as compared to focusing on just what's on the test. The blend is kind of a natural thing that occurs as a result of having two teachers. For example, in [the basic skills class], they break them into groups. One teacher focuses on improving their overall reading ability, their comprehension, literal comprehension, identification of vocabulary. She has spelling tests. She does real traditional kinds of things that she has done for years and then those students go the next day to the other teacher and she takes them individually and works on repeated reading techniques and also works on reading current events, letters to the editor, those kind of things that will hopefully help the student as they work through the basic skills test." The students would be in the reading lab almost every day as part of this course. Students take weekly current events tests/quizzes found in local newspapers. Teachers also create a weekly test based on those current events and model the test after the Minnesota Basic Skills Reading Test. Students are required to do reader response journal entries to debate articles presented in the weekly current events newspaper features. Teachers encourage the use of highlighters to identify the main ideas of the story/articles, use reciprocal teaching to identify main ideas in articles and work on decoding and vocabulary through the passage context…[students] do practice tests on the computer and in packet form, but that's not done on a weekly basis."

- In the basic skills class for math, "it's all classroom. The course uses locally developed websites that allow students to take strand tests individually and get immediate answers. Students also work on packets developed by other school districts, such as Roseville and St. Paul. Finally, students may also practice building their math skills by using flashcards and CD-ROMs."

- "We do a lot of skills…So, we would do vocabulary sometimes in context and sometimes out, we'd do multiple meaning words…we did comprehension. We used some of the Jamestown materials, very good stuff. We pulled in other things. We'd work on phonics, decoding, the basic putting words together and taking them apart. For the high school kids, you don't want to give them an elementary book, so I bought them a tape set that we're using now and some lower level higher interest things for phonics. We also have done skill books on reading words in context, vocabulary, comprehension, inference, we work on all of those specific skills also and then newspapers. We brought in the newspapers and we do a lot of pulling apart of articles and looking for main idea, supporting details, vocabulary, author's point of view—the 6 strands of the basic standards test…There's a brand new book by a publisher in Georgia…it has a pretest and a post-test and then it gives lesson ideas in the middle, but the test is set up like the practice test. The kids will take the practice test maybe twice during the semester, just to see where they're at. We'll give it again in January. I demand that all my math people and all my English and reading people give that practice test in January."

Note that just as the state has left the development and implementation of additional instructional opportunities up to the discretion of the districts, many of the districts have left much of the development and implementation of these opportunities up to individual high schools within the district. In a district with several high schools, each high school would have teachers who develop and teach these remedial courses. District-level curriculum specialists provide support, but in general would not provide curriculum to be used district-wide. Because each school often has autonomy in how they address the needs of students who

require additional instruction, several other decisions are left up to the discretion of the schools and districts.

For example, some schools offer basic skills classes in reading and/or math and provide students with subject-area credit (i.e., a student can receive math or English credit for enrolling in a basic skills course), while other schools offer these courses for elective credit (i.e., a student would take the basic skills class instead of some other elective, such as music or graphic arts). In some schools, students take a basic skills English or math class in place of a grade-level English or math class; for example, instead of enrolling in 10th grade English, the student would enroll in a basic skills English class. In other schools, students enroll in all regularly scheduled courses (such as 9th grade math or English) and take basic skills courses as their electives.

In districts with more than one high school, these decisions are made at the school level, rather than at the district level. For example, one high school in a district may enroll students who need additional instruction in a basic skills course for elective credit and also keep those students enrolled in all regularly scheduled courses. Another high school in this same district may place students into regularly scheduled courses according to ability, meaning that students who need additional instruction would be placed into a basic level course that has a considerable remediation focus.

Remediation within regular classes using ability grouping. One of the educators in a smaller, non-metro district noted that "the remedial work we're doing is happening within the regular classes." In this case, students who have not met the proficiency requirements in math or reading and who attend schools that do not offer a basic skills course in, for example math, are often placed in courses based on ability. For example, a school may offer two sections of 9th grade mathematics. Students who had not passed the math BST would enroll in the basic level (as opposed to advanced) 9th grade math course. This course would include a focus on improving the student's basic skills in math in order to pass the BST.

In one of the districts represented here, students who have not met the BST math criterion are placed in a pre-algebra class. These students are exposed to the pre-algebra curriculum, but emphasis is placed on those skills tested on the math BST. Practice tests are used throughout the course, and the entire month of January is spent reviewing for the February administration of the math BST.

Reading and math across the curriculum. For the most part, when additional instructional assistance is provided within regular classes, the classes are broken into sections based on ability (as described above). However, some of the schools represented here are stressing basic skills in reading, writing, and math throughout the curriculum for all students. For example, one educator mentioned that teachers in his school are using the Strategies for Teaching Reading Program (STRP) to emphasize reading skills across the curriculum; in this same school, the math department asks other subject-area teachers to work with students on a specific math concept (e.g., estimation) weekly in the context of their classes (the concept is introduced, along with ideas for teaching it, in the weekly staff newsletter); another educator explained that teachers in their high schools are emphasizing the six-trait writing process across the curriculum. An article in the *Star Tribune* (Duchesne, 2000, February 7) discussed teacher training in both the Minneapolis and Robbinsdale school districts. Paul Dillenberger (from the Minneapolis school district) and Gayle Walkowiak (from the Robbinsdale school district) described the two districts' efforts to incorporate reading and math instruction across the curriculum: teacher training in these districts is designed to provide teachers with the skills to integrate reading and mathematics concepts into all subject areas.

Summer school programs. All of the schools and districts represented here offer summer school courses to help students meet the proficiency requirements in reading and math. The July administration of the BSTs drives the summer school schedule; that is, schools and districts run basic skills summer school for the three weeks (or four or six weeks, depending on the district) prior to the July test administration of the BSTs. The summer session ends during the week the BSTs are administered. The focus of these summer school pro-

grams, as well as the instructional materials and approaches, is similar to the basic skills classes offered during the regular school day discussed above. Based on their attendance record, students can earn credit (elective or subject-area, depending on the school or district) for attending summer school. Although some respondents suggested that earning credits may be one way to entice students to attend summer school, one educator noted that many students do not actually need these additional credits. Two educators interviewed pointed out that just as there may be no way to entice students to attend summer school, there is also no way to force students to attend; that is, two people explained that summer school is mandatory for students who have not passed a BST (it is required by both the state and the district), but they have no way of enforcing this policy.

After-school and Saturday programs. All but one of the eight districts offers some type of after-school or Saturday morning test preparation program. Because these programs are considered "cram sessions" or test preparation sessions, the sessions are usually offered during the month of January (since the test is administered in early February) and serve to hone the skills tested on the BSTs. Programs vary by school and district, but sessions last approximately two to four hours. For example, in one school district, 15 after-school sessions are offered. During the first meeting, students take a practice test. The next seven days are devoted to "cramming" for the reading BST; the last seven days are devoted to "cramming" for the math BST. Typically, certified staff are paid overtime to run these programs. Students do not receive credit, and the interview respondents did not mention offering any other incentives to the students. Respondents noted that the majority of students who take advantage of these after-school programs are students who scored very near a passing score on a previous administration of the reading or math BST.

Resource rooms. Several of the districts have made resource rooms available to students. One district offers a math resource room during regular school hours, and students can visit the resource room during study hall periods. This resource room offers students a chance to practice math skills with a teacher. Students can also use the district math packets available for each of the eight strands tested on the math BST. These packets include a vocabulary section, practice problems, and so forth. The high schools in this same district also have computerized reading and math tutorials available for students to use in the computer lab. Another district has sample tests and study pointers available in the counseling center, as well as tutors available at site learning centers. Students can also use the computers in these centers to access the practice tests on the state website.

Study packets. This category of remediation opportunity encompasses a variety of efforts that schools and districts are implementing in the form of study packets or home review techniques. For example, a few districts provide tips for parents on how to help their students review for the tests at home, such as encouraging students to read at home for one-half hour per day or reading newspaper articles with your child and then asking them comprehension questions. Several educators in the districts represented here mentioned that study packets are available for students to help them study for the reading and/or math BST. For math, several districts have developed remediation packages for each of the eight strands of the math BST. These packets include vocabulary review, skill review, practice items, and practice tests.

One school combined the after-school component with study packets. Students who scored just below the cut score on the BST in reading or math were provided with a take-home study packet. After completing the practice materials and a practice test, the students could attend an after-school session, during which time the Basic Skills Test Coordinator would correct their work and provide any needed instruction. This opportunity was available for 6–8 weeks prior to the February administration of the BSTs.

Which Students Qualify for these Additional Instructional Opportunities?

Identification and Diagnosis. The *Indiana Basic Competency Skills Testing and Remediation Program Manual* (Indiana State Department of Education, 1985) explains that remedial programs include three basic components: identification, diagnosis, and instruction. As discussed above, a variety of instructional oppor-

tunities are being offered to students in the eight districts sampled. However, it is also important to discuss the identification and diagnosis components.

To identify students in need of additional instructional assistance, the schools and districts represented here make decisions about what types of additional instructional opportunities a student needs based on his/her BST score. For example, in a *Star Tribune* article, researched independently from this study, Duchesne (2000, February 7) found that "in Mounds View schools, as in many districts, students receive different kinds of intervention based on their test scores. If students come within 5 points of passing, they may only need a little coaching in test-taking strategies. If the gap is 10 to 15 points, teachers generally recommend a prep course, especially for the math test. If the gap is more than 15 points, then enrolling in a basic-skills preparation class is required."

For the districts investigated in this study, students who score 64% or lower on a BST typically qualify for any additional instructional opportunities offered. In some districts, these students are required to take advantage of these additional instructional opportunities, particularly the basic skills courses. Schools cannot require students to take a course against the wishes of a parent. However, unless a parent indicates that he/she does not want the student to be enrolled in a basic skills course, the school counselor in some schools and districts will simply schedule the student for that additional instructional opportunity. In other districts, students and parents decide whether the student will participate in additional instructional opportunities. However, due to legal and opportunity-to-learn considerations, school districts require a parent signature stating that they have opted to have their student *not* participate in these additional instructional opportunities.

In most districts, students who score 65% or higher are simply encouraged to read more nonfiction, take practice tests, use study packets or resource rooms (if available), and attend an after-school "cram" session before the next test administration. One educator stated, "we know that about 50% of the kids who fail the 8th grade test...will pass in 9th grade. So, sometimes, and often, it's just a year of maturation, a year of growth, an additional year of math or English courses that will get them to the point where they will pass and we don't want to overly excite parents or students." Another educator stated that they are finding that they have "more success with successive trials" versus providing a wide variety of remedial work. Thus, based on a certain score, educators determine what a student needs in order to pass the BSTs, whether that includes four months in a classroom setting, six hours of after-school "cram" sessions, or just another year to mature.

In terms of diagnosing the types of skill deficiencies that students have, Hess (1985) reported that one of the obligations of the Alabama State Board of Education "involves returning clear, understandable reports of testing that will enable teachers and administrators to make accurate decisions concerning the instruction of students. Test results [for the Alabama High School Graduation Exam] on individual students must be precise enough to inform both the students and their teachers of skill weaknesses and areas needing improvement" (p. 5). In Minnesota, the CFL Web site claims that the BST Student Report provides "detailed information on how each student did on the test." Schools and districts can use this information to make changes and decisions about how and what to teach. Parents are encouraged to "review the results together" with their student, using the diagnostic report card, which "identifies specific areas in which your child may have excelled or done poorly." According to the educators interviewed, the information provided on a student's score report provides useful diagnostic information about the eight math strands; however, the information for reading is less useful for diagnosing reading skill deficiencies.

Limited English Proficiency and Special Education Students. The districts represented here encourage their special education and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students to pass the BSTs at the state level, rather than granting a pass-individual level or exemption. "We feel that they should have every opportunity to be exposed to the material and should pass the test... We would expect them to do that, and we keep them in the pool as long as possible." An educator in another district commented that for special education students,

"It's an IEP team decision, but we encourage IEP teams to provide opportunities before you exempt or lower the cut score…we encourage attempts at the test, before a cut score is lowered or an exemption is granted." In one district, the message to LEP and special education students has been "take pride in your growth."

Special education students and LEP students are exposed to additional instructional opportunities focusing on the basic skills through mainstream courses or through classes offered by the special education or LEP programs. One educator remarked that there is no rigid policy for placing LEP and special education students into courses. Students are evaluated individually based on what courses are offered and what courses would be beneficial for their learning needs. In one district, the special education students "have the same remediation opportunities" as regular education students, but "in addition to that, they have what we call Skills Reading, Skills Math, and Skills Study Hall. In those three instances, they are in an even smaller room, where there is a lower student to teacher ratio, usually with a paraprofessional in the room. And they work again on passing those skills tests." An educator in another district remarked, "We don't differentiate initiatives or availability of help by LEP or special education or regular education. Help would be provided by their special education teacher, for instance, if they were a learning disabled student in a reading class. ELL [English Language Learner] classes absolutely focus on those tests and preparation for them. So these students could take a basic skills reading [class] and also be getting help in special education or ELL classes."

Two of the educators interviewed explained that the focus on basic skills at the high school level for special education students has raised a philosophical debate within the special education community. The model often used in special education is "assisting students in completing their homework and their high standards work, and [the question becomes] where is the time to continue to focus on basic skills development?" One of these educators also pointed out that special education at the high school level has typically focused on helping special education students learn life skills for the transition from high school to adult life, rather than emphasizing basic skills in reading and math. Time constraints tend to place the emphasis on basic skills in conflict with the focus on life skills and the school-to-work transition.

However, the LEP coordinator in one district explained how "before this test the kids could breeze through classes, get credits, and graduate with very minimal proficiency in English." He felt that the adoption of the testing policy, which requires that LEP students pass the test, has resulted in more attention being paid to helping these students increase their reading and math proficiency.

In summary, LEP and special education students are afforded the same opportunities for additional instructional assistance as mainstream students, as well as the possibility of receiving even more remediation in their respective LEP or special education programs.

Non-Curricular Implications/Responses

Although the focus of this study was to investigate the additional instructional/curricular opportunities that schools and districts have made available for students who do not meet the basic standards in 8th grade, schools and districts are also making non-curricular responses in order to provide the additional instructional assistance needed by some students. Some of the non-curricular implications of the adoption and implementation of Minnesota's basic standards testing policy have been raised above (e.g., do students receive elective credit, subject area credit, or no credit for the additional assistance they participate in? Have schools adopted an opt-in or an opt-out policy with regard to students participating in these opportunities?). Schools and districts have also had to consider the following:

- how to encourage student motivation, participation, and attendance in remedial programs;
- how to handle students who transfer into districts in their later school years;

- how to address both the high standards and the basic standards;
- how to handle administrative and organizational issues, such as hiring, scheduling, and transportation;
- how to evaluate the effectiveness of these additional instructional opportunities.

Student Motivation, Participation, and Attendance

As educators in Texas and New Jersey found, motivating students to take advantage of the additional instructional opportunities being offered to them is one problematic issue that educators in these Minnesota districts are also facing. Apparently, for some students, the threat of not graduating from high school is too remote to comprehend. A study conducted on the impact of the Ohio proficiency test concluded, "the biggest obstacle to assistance in these districts was convincing students to attend optional remediation sessions. Unsuccessful incentives included serving food during the remediation session…and arranging for transportation home" (Ohio State Legislative Office of Education Oversight, 1993, p. 18). Educators in Minnesota are also finding it difficult to convince students to attend both optional and required remedial opportunities.

For example, one Minnesota educator noted that although summer school is required, there is no way to enforce this attendance policy. A report published by the Minneapolis Foundation, the Minneapolis Public Schools, and the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce (2000) about the Minneapolis Public Schools states, "of the 8th–11th grade students who have yet to pass the required tests and so must attend summer school, only 34 percent actually enrolled and attended" (p. 7). In another district, the educator interviewed discussed the dilemma of when and for how long to offer after-school programs—she acknowledged that the students would benefit from an after-school program that ran the entire fall semester, but also expressed concern about whether students would stay motivated to attend for that many weeks. "We talked about providing this kind of help from the beginning of school or did we want to target it and intensify it and we went for the targeting, because quite frankly, to hold a student to that kind of after school effort for 15 weeks, that's a long time."

One way that districts are beginning to handle this issue, at least for regular school day remediation opportunities, is to require students (and their parents) to opt-out of an opportunity rather than to opt-in. In other words, students who have not yet mastered the proficiencies tested on the BSTs will be placed in remedial classes (or other classes in which the basic skills will be emphasized) unless the parents state in writing that they do not want their child to participate in that additional instructional opportunity.

Transfer Students

Several respondents brought up the issue of students who transfer into their school districts. Many believed that the students who had attended schools in their own districts had more success on the BSTs than those students who were new to their district. One educator remarked, "For students who have been in our district a long time, we are finding that most of them pass by the third time." This issue of transfer students was a concern for these educators, because they felt they had not had an opportunity to provide transfer students with adequate preparation and/or remediation for the BSTs, and yet they were still being held accountable for that student's performance on the BSTs. Several other respondents commented on this issue as well:

- "We have seniors that need to test yet, but they have transferred into the district. I'm not counting them, and I can't, because those are kids that we did not have a chance to remediate. They were never mine to remediate."
- "Our hope is that we're out of this business [of remediation]. I think the proof will be 3-4 years from now, we see kids coming through who have been in the district for at least a year or two, having

better reading skills when they get to us [at the high school level]. The internal data that we have does already say that kids who are with us for a significant amount of time do well anyway, but I think overall the reading program will be stronger and the math program will be stronger K–12, so hopefully we will see fewer kids coming to us who don't have the skills, but we'll always have some, I'm sure. We've been satisfied so far with what we've been able to accomplish. If there were something else we could do, we'd do it. The sooner we can get them past that test, the easier it is for us."

- "The transfers in—that's terribly problematic. Anybody who comes in, is our kid, and we're going to accept them, love them, and teach them, but the state is holding us accountable for everybody else's problem. I've done studies, and kids who are with us from kindergarten on do much better than kids who transfer in. I was a junior high principal—kids would transfer in a week before the 8th grade test is given, I get the score, the kid gets a 40%, and that's my issue. I'm held accountable for it. That's wrong. Not that I shouldn't have that kid, but the state has to recognize some of the mobility issues."

Difficulty of Addressing Both the High Standards and the Basic Standards

Several of the respondents interviewed also mentioned the difficulty of helping students meet the high standards when they are still working on the basic standards. For example, some of the high standards are placed in elective courses, but students who need additional instruction in the basic skills often take basic skills reading or math courses in place of other elective courses. These basic skills classes, as the name suggests, focus only on the basic skills; that is, no high standards are placed in these courses. The following comments, made by several educators, reflect this dilemma:

- "One thing is that I would like to have a class for remediation, but I don't have the staff available. Also, there are not enough hours in the day for students to take all of the required classes they need to graduate, to get all the standards, and take a remediation class. We require 24 credit hours and the standards in order for a student to graduate and that alone takes 6 hours a day. We have 7 hours per day and students need to be taking classes 6 hours a day, so where would we fit in a remedial class?"

- "We always have to do two things. . . we have to remediate, but at the same time we have to expose kids to the high standards."

- "Well, what's hard for these kids is that they're going to be missing out on standards for one thing. So if you stop and think about it, to meet high standards, if you can't read it's going to be pretty tough. Where that's going to create an issue is kids who probably wouldn't be able to graduate in 4 years, because they haven't either passed basic skills or haven't achieved high standards yet. That's an issue schools will be faced with. Electives are an important part of meeting high standards, so they'll be missing out on some of that stuff. The standards are now placed throughout the curriculum. Taking regular classes and electives are an important way to meet the high standards; students taking these required electives may miss out on the high standards… If you're limited on the number of classes you can take to meet standards, you're limited then on the number of standards you can meet then, obviously. I think that'll be an issue."

Administrative/Organizational Issues

Hiring and Staffing Issues

Many of the schools and districts have hired reading teachers to teach the basic skills courses at the high school level. One respondent interviewed commented on how high school teachers "are so content

driven...they go to school to become a content teacher" and are not trained to teach reading skills; thus, many schools are specifically hiring teachers who have taught reading. One high school educator said they were hoping to hire an elementary teacher because "they know how to teach reading." Another school has hired a special education teacher with a reading licensure to teach the basic skills courses. Although any student needing remedial help could enroll in a course with this teacher, students scoring 50% or below would be automatically scheduled into this teacher's basic skills course [thus, as Strang (1981) found in his study of 13 states with proficiency testing, one implication of proficiency testing is that students needing additional instructional assistance are placed into specific courses taught by teachers with certain qualifications]. Several respondents commented on how schools and districts have hired reading teachers as one response to the introduction of the BSTs:

- "We hired a reading teacher. We put in a position that we didn't have before since the basic test. This reading teacher spends one semester at our middle schools working on preparation for children who have particular needs in reading and then in the fall semester she teaches the class at each one of our high schools so that kids have an option to take a class to build skills prior to the test. That is a class specifically for kids who need to retest...It is an added full-time position that we did not have before."

- "Absolutely, we've hired additional reading teachers."

- "Yes, we've hired reading folks. It's generally been special ed people with a licensure in reading...our ESL teacher has a reading license also."

One school has even reorganized the building layout so that all the reading teachers are clustered together on one floor at one end of the building. "We have all the reading up there, so they can simply exchange kids and don't even have to go out in the hall to do it."

Other schools and districts have reassigned staff so that basic skills courses could be offered to those students needing additional assistance. In some districts, this has created a need to hire additional teachers. One educator remarked, "In some instances, veteran teachers took the assignments, but it did cause the need to hire new teachers." Offering basic skills courses as electives has decreased enrollment in other electives; thus, those staff must be reassigned to other classes or duties so that they can be employed full-time. "We tried to keep programs intact, so we still have the Home Ec. instructor, we still offer industrial tech stuff, just not as many as we'd like, but the kids aren't there to take the classes. This changes how we hire and staff positions (as well as scheduling options for students). For instance, in industrial tech, we use [the teacher] as our school-to-work coordinator, and we use grant money to fund that, and he teaches one less class. We handle Home Ec. through retirement—person leaves, you don't replace them."

Some schools and districts have hired tutors for seniors who have not yet passed the BSTs. Other schools "hire staff and supend them" to offer the after-school and Saturday school cram sessions in January. Tutors and aides were also hired in some schools and districts to staff resource rooms and to help in after-school programs.

Several districts have added new staff positions to facilitate graduation standards planning and implementation. For example, high schools in one district use contingency funds to hire a Basic Skills Test Coordinator. The test coordinator is a teacher in the building who receives prep hour pay to dispense basic skills study packets, keep track of student data, keep track of student attendance at after-school programs, and so forth. For schools and districts that have not done this, however, much of the burden for keeping track of student BST data and ILP forms falls on the school counselors. No one interviewed mentioned that they had in-

creased the number of school counselors or the amount of clerical support for school counselors in order to meet this increased demand.

District-level basic standards positions have been created, such as math, reading, and writing curriculum specialists—these positions usually include a focus on the entire standards movement, including the basic skills. One educator commented, "You have a new position added. You have my position—I am a teacher on special assignment. We have one more teacher on special assignment who works primarily in the elementary level. [And two new teachers have been hired to fill these two spots.] So, you really have two full-time positions devoted to basic skills and the whole standards movement and our prevention efforts. Had there been no standards movement, these jobs would not exist."

Class Scheduling Issues

Schools and districts are faced with several decisions and issues around the scheduling of these additional instructional assistance opportunities. For example, if these opportunities are offered as elective courses only during the regular school day, students will not be able to enroll in other elective courses. However, offering this additional assistance after school or during the summer results in a longer school day or longer school year only for those students struggling to meet the minimum proficiencies tested.

As discussed above, some schools provide remediation within regular classes using ability grouping. Thus, for example, students needing additional instructional assistance would be placed into a special section of 9th grade English. Several schools found that offering the remedial courses through the English department increased the class sizes in other English classes. In response to the interview question "What have you had to give up to put these other things in place?", one educator stated, "the other courses have greater class sizes."

In terms of schools that offer basic skills classes as electives, the respondents stated that:

- "It has created other fallout, because it means that you reappropriate teachers to teach those classes and they're not teaching the geometry class or the algebra II class or the English Shakespeare class or whatever. So, it has required some creative, innovative scheduling of classes…They're an elective credit, so it's not in place of the required English 10. So, if you're taking Basic Skills Reading, you're not taking another elective such as business, art, band, drafting."

- "For reading, what we do is take a look at all the scores, which means you have to guess a little bit. Take an estimate of how many and develop enough sections to handle everybody. So, as the number decreases, we simply reduce sections….You'll need fewer art or fewer business or whatever because you have kids in other electives. We have fewer electives to offer. We've dropped some sections of industrial tech, we've dropped some Home Ec. I would guess we've dropped probably six-seven sections of electives."

The timing of the administration of the BSTs and of the reporting of BST score information also presents scheduling challenges for schools. The BSTs are administered in February, after most schools have begun a new semester, quarter, or trimester. Thus, for students enrolling in a basic skills class or a special section of an English or math class that focus on remedial instruction to help students pass the BSTs, the test administration would come at the beginning of this time and students would be forced to spend the entire semester, quarter, or trimester in a remedial class or section, regardless of their scores from the February administration of the BSTs. Summer test results are not released until after school has started in the fall; thus, students for whom scores do not yet indicate that they have passed the BSTs are scheduled into remedial opportunities and then readjustments are made once the school year has started if score reports from the July testing

indicate that the student has passed the BSTs.

Transportation Issues

Scheduling of additional instructional opportunities is also affected by the availability of transportation; that is, in order to schedule additional instructional opportunities after school, on Saturdays, or during the summer, educators need to consider the issue of transportation. Knowing that student participation, motivation, and attendance in these opportunities is already questionable, not being able to offer transportation would seem likely to decrease, even more, the likelihood of students participating in, or staying motivated to continue participating in, these remedial efforts.

One educator mentioned that it was difficult to offer after-school programs for students because there is no after-school transportation available. "Well, I think the biggest challenge, at least for high schools, has included transportation. If we ask students to stay after school, we have to provide a way for them to get home, and how do we do that?" At certain times, they have been able to obtain bus tokens for some of their programs, but because after-school transportation was not consistently provided, they could not plan on offering remediation during after-school hours. Thus, students need to obtain remediation during regular school hours, which may also affect a student's entire course schedule. Other educators interviewed for this study also mentioned the transportation issue for summer school programs.

Evaluation of Program Effectiveness

The amount and type of data about program effectiveness available to the educators interviewed for this study varied from district to district. Although conducting a true experiment with control and treatment groups to determine the effectiveness of remediation programs on subsequent test performance is not feasible in schools, people did express an interest and desire for better data information systems relating to which interventions seem most helpful for which students in helping them pass the basic skill requirements. One summer school coordinator stated, "we should know our success rate, but they [the district research and evaluation office] won't let us have the data. I have a sense that it's a good program, but if we could find out how our kids did, that would be helpful. We have more anecdotal evidence about how we're doing." Others commented:

- "Well, we know that kids who go to summer school and then take the basic standards test immediately following do pretty well and we have some data to show that. Truly, it is a perception that the more support and help you can give kids the better they're going to do. We don't know, we don't have data that shows that a control group who goes to movies all summer and the experimental group goes to summer school and then they both take the test and we see who does better. We don't have that kind of data. My guess is that the kids who did some reading during the summer would do better than the kids who just went to movies. That's what we believe, and we follow through with that belief by offering these opportunities for students."

- "I think they've been pretty effective."

- "Well, there is certainly some perception there, but…we did…collect data [at one school] that showed a very strong correlation between students attending after-school classes or tutoring and passing rates."

- "We've talked about [keeping careful data], and to be frank we just have not had the forces to do data to the level we'd like to. We have now put our testing into our district assessment office. At first, the Grad Rule technicians were handling all the basic testing and the analysis. We've now moved the test

> overseeing and data analysis into the district assessment office. So we'll have a few more people, but we want to say which intervention methods are the most effective, what can the data tell us, and until we get computerized on standards and basic skills, which we are not yet…we don't have the capability to do that without a very time-consuming process. So, we've done some of it, but not to the level we'd like. When you do that, you never know how valid your data is; for instance, we've gone out and interviewed kids after testing—' if you pass, tell us what you did' or 'if you didn't pass' and you try to get anecdotal data and you never know because there is so much going on. Kids who come to summer school tend to be more motivated and perhaps are kids who have more likelihood of passing anyway, so does that pass rate say that it was effective?"[5]

The Department of Children, Families & Learning (CFL) states that test results will "allow for identification of programming and strategies that work." Although the respondents interviewed recognized a need for improved uses of data to inform decisions, they still found themselves *responding* to the needs of students versus using data to *plan* interventions. They were not using data to determine which interventions were working (or not) or which ones were working for some students and not for others. The educators expressed the desire to use data to determine skill areas where students are lacking so they could design appropriate courses and interventions and use data to determine which interventions are working; however, they did not feel that they had the knowledge or capacity to do that (yet). Thus, although CFL encourages districts and schools to use the information from the tests to make changes and plan interventions, it may not be the case that schools are able to effectively accomplish this.

DISCUSSION

Impact on Students

Although many of the schools offered these additional instructional opportunities during regular school hours, it is important to consider whether this testing policy ultimately leads to students from certain groups having different educational experiences and different educational opportunities. The history of proficiency testing in K–12 education in the United States has resulted in unequal access to educational opportunities for certain groups. Darling-Hammond (1995) states:

> …differential allocations of resources are maintained and justified in substantial measure by the continued use of standardized testing for allocating curriculum opportunities. Over many decades, standardized tests have been used to define both teaching goals and students' opportunities to learn. As a tool for tracking students into different courses, levels, and kinds of instructional programs, testing has been a primary means for limiting or expanding students' life choices and their avenues for demonstrating competence. Increasingly, these uses of tests are recognized as having the unintended consequences of limiting students' access to further learning opportunities. (p. 475)

For example, using a qualitative case study methodology, Schleisman (1999) investigated one school district's responses to the BST. In this district, middle school students considered at-risk of not passing the BST were

[5] Note that in this study we did not talk to students about their participation in these remediation programs, nor did we obtain student data about what types of students take advantage of what remediation opportunities, what percentage of students take advantage of remediation opportunities, or what remediation opportunities seem to be the most effective in helping students meet the basic skill requirements in reading or math.

placed into remedial reading or math classes in place of health, keyboarding, or social studies. High school students who had not passed the test in 8th grade were also placed into remedial reading or math classes that focused exclusively on acquiring the basic skills needed to pass the BST. This suggests that when minimum competency testing policies are in effect, lower achieving students could have a very different educational experience than higher-achieving students. Higher-achieving students who pass the test may be exposed to instructional practices requiring higher-order thinking skills, whereas lower-achieving students experience a focus on tested, basic skills. Within a fixed amount of instructional time, higher achieving students can master both the basic skills and higher-order skills (usually offered in elective courses). Lower achieving students may be forced (with or without the BSTs or similar testing programs) to *choose* between mastering the core academic subjects versus higher-order content knowledge and skills if they do not master the basic skills prior to entering high school.

Duplication of Efforts

Due to the way Minnesota has implemented the basic standards testing policy, schools and districts have been left on their own to instruct students and improve passing rates. On the one hand, this speaks loudly of the local control in our state—the development and implementation of remediation efforts have been left up to the discretion of schools and districts. On the other hand, based on the results of this study, in which many schools and districts are responding similarly, it may be that they are all simply reinventing the wheel; that is, they are all developing similar remedial programs (of course, to say this with more certainty would require observation of the classrooms). Even within school districts, there seems to be a duplication of effort, because summer school programs are often developed at the district level, apart from the curriculum developed for basic skills classes offered during the regular school year (and developed independently by the teacher in charge of that class).

One recommendation would be to establish a network to share knowledge about remediation programs. In a final evaluation report for the Louisiana State Department of Education regarding their state-funded compensatory education and remedial programs, Rachal (1985) recommended "that the Bureau of Elementary Education, in conjunction with local school system compensatory/remedial personnel, develop and disseminate models for remedial instruction. This practice would help to further improve the program and would take advantage of the many good programs, materials, and instructional techniques that have resulted from the work of the past four years" (p. viii). It would appear that the Minnesota's "Best Practices Network" would fall into this category, but we heard about the network from only two people. Why did others not mention it? Is the network not that well-known? Are the information and services currently provided by the network useful to schools and districts? Perhaps a literature review about effective remedial practices would be useful for the "Best Practices Network" to have available to share with districts. Many schools and districts stated that they were using the practice tests on the Minneapolis Public Schools website or using remediation packets developed by neighboring school districts; thus, informal networks are developing to share ideas and information. A strategy for formalizing these networks would be useful.

Curriculum and Instruction

The data obtained in this study indicate that Minnesota schools and districts have largely utilized familiar models of student grouping (i.e., put all the students having trouble into one class and try to remediate them), remediation ("more of the same"), and test-preparation techniques (drill and skill, practice tests). One educator commented, "I don't know that our remediation efforts are all that wonderful to be perfectly honest, but they're [the BSTs] there and the kids know they're there and the kids know they are accountable. So I think more than having discovered magical ways to teach reading and math, it's just the fact that the hurdle is there and they have to get over it…"

Many educators expressed frustration over the need for more information about "best practices" regarding, for example, how to teach reading to older students or to English language learners still struggling with reading. Several principals stated they would like to hire more reading specialists who could provide staff development on how best to help older readers and second language learners, but they have found it very difficult to find people qualified for these positions.

Several interview respondents were concerned that without this information on "best practices" in reading, the remedial classes may offer only "more of the same" approaches to remediation. The educators acknowledged, however, that the pressure to help students pass the BSTs makes it difficult to try new, less researched techniques (not to mention the accountability pressure of test scores decreasing within the district and the fact that there is little information on the effectiveness of remedial programs). Stecher & Barron (1999) found that "given limited time and resources, schools often direct their attention more narrowly to practices that will enhance student performance on the tests. This is one way in which the discrepancy between broad goals and specific measures may reduce the effectiveness of a test-based accountability system" (no page numbers provided). The evidence in this study supports that contention; that is, although the districts have responded with a large number of actions, many wish these actions were coupled with more information on "best practices."

Liu, Spicuzza, and Erickson (1999) conducted two focus groups with 23 Minnesota educators to investigate their experiences and perceptions of the impact of the BSTs on LEP students. One focus group consisted of teachers and administrators from the metropolitan area; the other consisted of teachers and administrators from outside the metropolitan area. Although several concerns emerged from the focus group discussion, one mentioned by focus group participants was the ability to provide remediation to these students:

> Participants from smaller districts raised concerns over remediation, fearing that regular classroom teachers would be required simultaneously to provide instruction in the regular curriculum and remediation for students who did not pass the test. Questions were raised as to how teachers will deal with students who fail the reading test when they are not necessarily trained in direct reading instructional techniques. Participants from greater Minnesota stated that they do not have the staffing and resources to provide remediation for LEP students who fail the examination. (p. 318)

Thus, the concern over being able (i.e., having the knowledge and staff) to provide effective remediation opportunities for students who do not initially master the proficiencies tested on the BSTs has been raised not only in this study but in other studies conducted in Minnesota as well.

SUMMARY

Schools and districts are working to help students master the reading and mathematics proficiencies tested on the BSTs. A variety of additional instructional opportunities are offered to students who do not initially meet the basic standards in 8th grade:

- basic skills classes offered during the regular school day;
- remediation within regular classes, into which students are placed based on ability;
- a focus on reading and math across the curriculum;
- summer school programs;
- after-school and Saturday programs;
- resource rooms; and
- study packets

However, given the dearth of data evaluating the effectiveness of these opportunities in helping students master the reading and mathematics basic standards, it is difficult to be certain which opportunities are most effective, under what circumstances, or for which students. Therefore, schools and districts find it difficult to be certain of how best to assist students in mastering the proficiencies required by the Graduation Rule. Further study would help schools and districts to be able to correctly identify the best way of assisting students experiencing difficulty with basic skills, and in addition would permit schools and districts to address various remediation issues from a position supported by solid data.

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Appendix A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction

1. I am interested in documenting how schools and districts have responded to the Minnesota Basic Standards Test (BST). To begin, however, first describe to me how your school or district has changed since the introduction of the BST.

Remediation Activities Implemented (School- or District-Level Responses)

2. In this study, I am most interested in the school- and district-level remediation efforts that you have implemented on behalf of students who do not meet the basic standards in 8th grade (i.e., students who do not pass the BST in 8th grade). At this point, please tell me about the types of remediation efforts that your school or district has implemented for these students who have not passed the BST.

PROBE FOR:

- 2.1 To what extent has your school or district intensified the reading or math content in non-remedial courses (e.g., the push for "reading in the content areas")?
- 2.1.1 Has this been done with the explicit purpose of helping students meet the basic requirements?
- 2.2 To what extent has your school or district offered coursework explicitly designed to help students meet the basic requirements in math and reading?
- 2.3 What other "remedial" opportunities are available for students (e.g., resource rooms, computer labs, practice tests, informational packets, tutoring, etc.)?

3. Please provide more in-depth information about each remediation effort or specific response that your school or district has made. [After a description of the types of remediation efforts has been provided, ask the following questions about each remediation response (i.e., each response that is a school-level policy or practice, not things that individual teachers are doing in their own classrooms).]

PROBE FOR:

- 3.1 Why was that specific response chosen?
- 3.2 When does this response take place (i.e., during regular school hours, in after-school or summer school programs)?
- 3.3 Is it required or voluntary?
- 3.3.1 If voluntary, how does a student "opt out"?
- 3.4 Do students receive elective credit only or do they receive math or English credit?
- 3.5 Is it school-wide or only geared toward students who have failed the BST?
- 3.6 Who qualifies for this opportunity (mainstream, LEP, special ed)?
- 3.6.1 How are students selected?
- 3.6.2 Is there a limit on the number of students who can participate? If so, how is priority given? What happens to the other students?
- 3.6.3 In which grades?
- 3.7 How do you know when a student no longer needs to be part of this opportunity?
- 3.8 Was it a district-mandated "response"? School-level instituted response? State-mandated?
- 3.9 Are the remediation efforts (coursework, resource rooms, informational packets, etc.) focused mainly on test-taking skills or on the more general subject areas of reading and math?

3.9.1 Is the course billed as a "course to pass graduation standards tests"?

3.9.2 How heavily are practice tests utilized?

4. In general, are LEP students and/or special education students part of these opportunities or is the perception that "their programs" address their remediation needs?

5. Is there anything you feel you should be doing, that you aren't currently doing? If so, what? And for what reasons have you not done that? That is, is there something that you think needs to be done that hasn't been done? If so, what is it? Why hasn't it been done (not enough resources, no political backing, etc.)? Are there things that you are doing, that you should be doing for more students than you currently are?

Resources

6. What reallocation of resources or additional resources were necessary in order to provide remediation for students in grades 9–12 (or 8–12) who do not meet the basic requirements in math or reading?

PROBE FOR:

6.1 Have you had to hire more staff?

6.2 Have you reassigned staff?

6.3 Have you had to provide additional staff development?

6.3.1 If so, who was involved (all staff or just those teaching "remedial" courses)?

6.3.2 What topics were covered?

6.4 If you have added courses to the daily schedule, were other courses dropped from the schedule?

6.5 Have you had to purchase new books, computer programs, other materials?

6.6 Has your district and/or school added other "testing opportunities"?

6.7 Other?

7. What have you had to give up to put these other things in place?

8. To what extent have you had adequate resources for what you want to do?

Perceptions

9. How effective have these remediation efforts been in helping students meet the basic requirements in math and reading?

PROBE FOR:

9.1 Do you have any data on which of these remediation responses have been helpful or which ones haven't been helpful?

9.1.1 If so, what does the data tell you?

9.1.2 If not, what are your perceptions about which responses are the most helpful?

10. Do you believe that the changes made in response to this test make things better?

11. Describe your best-case scenario—what would your responses look like or what would you do to raise test scores if you could do anything?

Table 1
Summary of Remediation Efforts Implemented by District A: Metro*

REMEDIATION OPPORTUNITY	READING	MATH
Basic Skills Classes During the Regular School Day	• Students are required to take a basic skills course if reading BST score is 64% or below. – This course uses computer-assisted and direct instruction techniques (for students scoring 50% or below, mainly direct instruction), practice tests. – The focus is on developing the skills tested on the BST and test-taking skills in general. – The course is a required elective course. – Students must continue to take a basic skills reading course until they pass the reading BST. – Students continue to take their regular grade-level English courses. – Simulated, building-wide practice test administered in December.	• Students are required to take a basic skills course if math BST score is 64% or below. – The focus is on developing the skills tested on the BST and test-taking skills in general, practice tests. – The course is a required elective course, usually reserved for juniors or seniors struggling with passing the math BST. – Students must continue to take a basic skills math course until they pass the math BST. – Students continue to take their regular grade-level math courses. – Simulated, building-wide practice test administered in December.
Remediation Within Regular Day Classes Using Ability Grouping		
Focus on Reading and Math Across the Curriculum		
Summer School Programs	• Strategies for Teaching Reading Program (STRP) used to encourage reading across the curriculum.	• The math department provides teachers in other content areas with ideas on how to use math concepts across the curriculum.
After-School and Saturday Programs	• A reading basic skills summer school class is required for any student who has not passed the reading BST and is funded through the ALC. – Students can receive credit for attending. – The emphasis is on developing the skills tested on the BST and on test-taking skills in general. • Offer summer BST testing.	• A math basic skills summer school class is required for any student who has not passed the math BST and is funded through the ALC. – Students can receive credit for attending. – The emphasis is on developing the skills tested on the BST and on test-taking skills in general. • Offer summer BST testing.
Resource Rooms	• Basic skills tutorials are offered after-school using ALC funds. – Students scoring 64% or below are required to take advantage of after-school basic skills tutoring. – Most students scoring 65% or above choose this opportunity for basic skills help (rather than enrolling in a basic skills class)	• Basic skills tutorials are offered after-school using ALC funds. – Students scoring 64% or below are required to take advantage of after-school basic skills tutoring. – Most students scoring 65% or above choose this opportunity for basic skills help (rather than enrolling in a basic skills class).
Study Packets	• Reading teachers and rooms are located in one area of the building. Any students can use the Accelerated Reader program to work on reading skills.	

* This information is based on only one high school within this district. Thus, depending on the high school, there will be slight variations in when and how the remediation opportunities are offered.

Table 2
Summary of Remediation Efforts Implemented by District B: Metro*

REMEDIATION OPPORTUNITY	READING	MATH
Basic Skills Classes During the Regular School Day	• Basic skills reading course – Offered in grades 10-12 as elective credit • 9th grade basic skills course – Offered to 9th grade students who have not passed the reading BST as elective credit – Although this class is voluntary, students are placed in this course unless parents object – Considerable focus on skill remediation – Students still take a 9th grade English class OR (depending on the high school): • Basic skills reading course – Uses Accelerated Reader Program – Offered in grades 10-12, aimed at 11th graders, for English credit • Special section of 9th grade English – Uses Accelerated Reader Program – Offered to 9th grade students who have not passed the reading BST for English credit – Although this class is voluntary, students are placed in this course unless parents object – Considerable focus on reading skills within the regular 9th grade English curriculum	
Remediation Within Regular Day Classes Using Ability Grouping		• Pre-algebra math class – Basic skills review – Students spend January reviewing for the BST – District remediation packets are used – Students take practice tests in district math packets and on State's website
Focus on Reading and Math Across the Curriculum		
Summer School Programs	• District offers basic skills summer school class in reading and summer BST testing – Focus: to help students pass the reading BST – Basic skills and test preparation focus	• District offers basic skills summer school class in math and summer BST testing – Focus: to help students pass the math BST – Basic skills and test preparation focus
After-School and Saturday Programs	• Computerized Instruction – Available before, during, and after school – No course credit, but supervised by a teacher – Tutorials available in reading	• Computerized Instruction – Available before, during, and after school – No course credit, but supervised by a teacher – Tutorials available in math
Resource Rooms		• Math Resource Room – Students can use this room during free hours – Offers a chance to practice math skills with a teacher – District math packets are available for use – No course credit for doing this
Study Packets		• District math packets are available for use

* This district also offers one-on-one tutoring for seniors who have not passed the MBST. This opportunity is offered at the convenience of both the tutor and the student.

Table 3
Summary of Remediation Efforts Implemented by District C: Metro

REMEDIATION OPPORTUNITY	READING	MATH
Basic Skills Classes During the Regular School Day	• Basic skills reading course – Students who have not passed the reading BST have the option of enrolling in the course in 9th and 10th grade; students are required to enroll in the course in 11th grade if they still have not passed the reading test – Considerable focus on skill remediation – Students receive credit in the subject area, as an elective credit – Students still take grade-level English courses	• Basic skills math course – Students who have not passed the math BST have the option of enrolling in the course in 9th and 10th grade; students are required to enroll in the course in 11th grade if they still have not passed the reading test – Considerable focus on skill remediation – Students receive credit in the subject area, as an elective credit – Students still take grade-level math courses
Remediation Within Regular Day Classes Using Ability Grouping		
Focus on Reading and Math Across the Curriculum		
Summer School Programs	• District offers basic skills summer school class in reading that is funded through ALC – Focus: to help students pass the reading BST – Basic skills and test preparation focus – Transportation is provided – Students receive elective, subject area credit	• District offers basic skills summer school class in math that is funded through ALC – Focus: to help students pass the math BST – Basic skills and test preparation focus – Transportation is provided – Students receive elective, subject area credit
After-School and Saturday Programs	*[Note that for this district, the after school programs vary from high school to high school. This is an example of the after-school program offered at one of the high schools.]* • Three levels of instruction are offered in the after-school program, depending on BST score: – Students scoring 1%-10% below passing are provided with take-home study materials. Students come once per week to have the take-home materials graded, to assess areas of need, and to pick up more take-home materials. – Students who score 10%-20% below passing attend after-school classes taught by staff. Instruction is directed at helping the students pass the BST. – Students scoring 20% or below passing receive direct tutorial help (one-on-one tutoring or small groups) – Students may receive ALC credit for after-school classes and bus money.	*[Note that for this district, the after school programs vary from high school to high school. This is an example of the after-school program offered at one of the high schools.]* • Three levels of instruction are offered in the after-school program, depending on BST score: – Students scoring 1%-10% below passing are provided with take-home study materials. Students come once per week to have the take-home materials graded, to assess areas of need, and to pick up more take-home materials. – Students who score 10%-20% below passing attend after-school classes taught by staff. Instruction is directed at helping the students pass the BST. – Students scoring 20% or below passing receive direct tutorial help (one-on-one tutoring or small groups) – Students may receive ALC credit for after-school classes and bus money.
Resource Rooms		
Study Packets		

Table 3
Summary of Remediation Efforts Implemented by District C: Metro

REMEDIATION OPPORTUNITY	READING	MATH
Basic Skills Classes During the Regular School Day	• Basic skills reading course – Students who have not passed the reading BST have the option of enrolling in the course in 9th and 10th grade; students are required to enroll in the course in 11th grade if they still have not passed the reading test – Considerable focus on skill remediation – Students receive credit in the subject area, as an elective credit – Students still take grade-level English courses	• Basic skills math course – Students who have not passed the math BST have the option of enrolling in the course in 9th and 10th grade; students are required to enroll in the course in 11th grade if they still have not passed the reading test – Considerable focus on skill remediation – Students receive credit in the subject area, as an elective credit – Students still take grade-level math courses
Remediation Within Regular Day Classes Using Ability Grouping		
Focus on Reading and Math Across the Curriculum		
Summer School Programs	• District offers basic skills summer school class in reading that is funded through ALC – Focus: to help students pass the reading BST – Basic skills and test preparation focus – Transportation is provided – Students receive elective, subject area credit	• District offers basic skills summer school class in math that is funded through ALC – Focus: to help students pass the math BST – Basic skills and test preparation focus – Transportation is provided – Students receive elective, subject area credit
After-School and Saturday Programs	*[Note that for this district, the after school programs vary from high school to high school. This is an example of the after-school program offered at one of the high schools.]* • Three levels of instruction are offered in the after-school program, depending on BST score: – Students scoring 1%-10% below passing are provided with take-home study materials. Students come once per week to have the take-home materials graded, to assess areas of need, and to pick up more take-home materials. – Students who score 10%-20% below passing attend after-school classes taught by staff. Instruction is directed at helping the students pass the BST. – Students scoring 20% or below passing receive direct tutorial help (one-on-one tutoring or small groups) – Students may receive ALC credit for after-school classes and bus money.	*[Note that for this district, the after school programs vary from high school to high school. This is an example of the after-school program offered at one of the high schools.]* • Three levels of instruction are offered in the after-school program, depending on BST score: – Students scoring 1%-10% below passing are provided with take-home study materials. Students come once per week to have the take-home materials graded, to assess areas of need, and to pick up more take-home materials. – Students who score 10%-20% below passing attend after-school classes taught by staff. Instruction is directed at helping the students pass the BST. – Students scoring 20% or below passing receive direct tutorial help (one-on-one tutoring or small groups) – Students may receive ALC credit for after-school classes and bus money.
Resource Rooms		
Study Packets		

Table 5
Summary of Remediation Efforts Implemented by District E: Non-Metro

REMEDIATION OPPORTUNITY	READING	MATH
Basic Skills Classes During the Regular School Day		
Remediation Within Regular Day Classes Using Ability Grouping		• 7th and 8th grade: students are placed into a regular or accelerated math class based on ITBS scores • 9th grade: two algebra classes are offered, one using an incremental approach and one using a traditional approach. Students are not forced into either class; placement decisions are made based on ITBS scores, teacher information, and parent information. Most students who have yet to pass the math BST take the traditional algebra class, so this teacher is "hitting the remediation hard," as well as the algebra.
Focus on Reading and Math Across the Curriculum	• Students are not placed into classes based on BST scores. "The remedial work we're doing is happening within the regular classes."	• Students are not placed into classes based on BST scores: "The remedial work we're doing is happening within the regular classes." • Use a CD-ROM from the St. Paul Public Schools, which has 50 specific lessons in all areas. "We are using that in all our math classes."
Summer School Programs	• Offer summer BST testing	• Offer summer BST testing
After-School and Saturday Programs	*[Note that prior to the after-school cram session, a meeting is held for parents of students who have not yet taken or not yet passed the BSTs.]* • After-school "cram" session offered in January – A state published pretest is administered – 7 study sessions for reading BST are held after-school – Not mandatory – Taught by certified staff – Students can take activity bus home	*[Note that prior to the after-school cram session, a meeting is held for parents of students who have not yet taken or not yet passed the BSTs.]* • After-school "cram" session offered in January – A state published pretest is administered – 7 study sessions for math BST are held after-school – Not mandatory – Taught by certified staff – Students can take activity bus home
Resource Rooms		
Study Packets		

Table 6
Summary of Remediation Efforts Implemented by District F: Non-Metro

REMEDIATION OPPORTUNITY	READING	MATH
Basic Skills Classes During the Regular School Day	• Basic skills reading course – Students with scores of 65% or below are enrolled in this course – Offered in Grades 9-12 for subject area credit – An individualized program with skill instruction and reading materials – Students continue taking this course until mastery on the BST *[Note that this option is available in one of the high schools in this district; the other high school offers remediation within regular classes by ability grouping.]*	• For juniors and seniors who have not passed the math BST and who do not need math credit, a basic skills course is offered during the day for no credit (it is essentially an extended day opportunity that one high school has opted to hold during the regular school day).
Remediation Within Regular Day Classes Using Ability Grouping	• Offer leveled language arts classes – Students are placed into these classes based on BST scores – Focus: basic skills review	• Offer leveled math classes – Students are placed into these classes based on BST scores – Focus: basic skills review
Focus on Reading and Math Across the Curriculum	• More emphasis on the basic standards in all classes	• More emphasis on the basic standards in all classes
Summer School Programs	• Basic skills summer school class offered in reading – Focus: to help students pass the reading BST – Computer-based instruction – Offered to students going into 9th grade-12th – Students can receive course credit, if needed • Offer summer BST testing	• Basic skills summer school class offered in math – Focus: to help students pass the math BST – Computer-based instruction – Offered to students going into 9th grade-12th – Students can receive course credit, if needed • Offer summer BST testing
After-School and Saturday Programs	• After-school "cram" sessions – Teachers are hired to teach these sessions – Review basics, take practice tests – Focus on reading non-fiction	• After-school "cram" sessions – Teachers are hired to teach these sessions – Review basics, take practice tests
Resource Rooms		
Study Packets		

Table 7
Summary of Remediation Efforts Implemented by District G: Non-Metro

REMEDIATION OPPORTUNITY	READING	MATH
Basic Skills Classes During the Regular School Day	• Basic skills reading course – Students have the option of taking this course for elective credit – Focus is to get students ready for the reading BST—emphasize comprehension and inference – Considerable focus on skill remediation	
Remediation Within Regular Day Classes Using Ability Grouping		
Focus on Reading and Math Across the Curriculum	• Stressing reading across the curriculum • Teachers have been asked to encourage students who haven't passed—to read more, to ask them about how they are planning to prepare for the test, and so forth	• Math teachers will do a one-minute warm-up exercise using a basic skills problem • Teachers have been asked to encourage students who haven't passed—to ask them about how they are planning to prepare for the test, and so forth
Summer School Programs	• A reading basic skills summer school class is offered for any student who has not passed the reading BST – Focus: to help students pass the reading BST – Basic skills and test preparation focus • Offer summer BST testing for students who have attended summer school	• A math basic skills summer school class is offered for any student who has not passed the math BST – Focus: to help students pass the math BST – Basic skills and test preparation focus • Offer summer BST testing for students who have attended summer school
After-School and Saturday Programs	• Test prep sessions – Offered after-school and on Saturdays during January in two, 1.25-hour block sessions – Hire staff and stipend them – No credit is awarded – Focus—to help students pass the reading BST; one-on-one help	• Test prep sessions – Offered after-school and on Saturdays during January in four, 1.25-hour block sessions – Hire staff and stipend them – No credit is awarded – Focus—to help students pass the reading BST; one-on-one help
Resource Rooms	• High School Counseling Centers – Peer or community tutors are available OR (depending on the high school): • Site Learning Center – Paid aides are available as tutors	• High School Counseling Centers – Peer or community tutors are available OR (depending on the high school): • Site Learning Center – Paid aides are available as tutors
Study Packets	• High School Counseling Centers – Sample tests and study pointers are available for students and parents	• High School Counseling Centers – Sample tests and study pointers are available for students and parents

Table 8
Summary of Remediation Efforts Implemented by District H: Non-Metro

REMEDIATION OPPORTUNITY	READING	MATH
Basic Skills Classes During the Regular School Day	• Basic skills reading course – Recommended for students scoring 64% or lower on the reading BST; students are placed into this course unless a parent objects – Offered in Grades 9-12 as elective credit – Considerable focus on skill remediation: phonics, decoding, vocabulary in and out of context, comprehension – Students still take a grade-level English class – Students continue to take this basic skills reading course until they pass the reading BST – Simulated practice test given in January	• Basic skills math course – Recommended for students scoring 64% or lower on the math BST; students are placed into this course unless a parent objects – Offered in Grades 9-12 as elective credit – Considerable focus on skill remediation – Students still take a grade-level math class – Students continue to take this basic skills math course until they pass the math BST – Simulated practice test given in January
Remediation Within Regular Day Classes Using Ability Grouping	• One section of the basic skills reading course is offered to very low ability readers and special education students	• A non-basic skills math class is offered to students who do not want to continue taking the basic skills math class – Remedial math skills are reviewed in this class
Focus on Reading and Math Across the Curriculum		
Summer School Programs	• Offer summer BST testing	• Offer summer BST testing
After-School and Saturday Programs		
Resource Rooms		
Study Packets	• For students who do not choose to enroll in other remediation opportunities, packets are available with practice tests and information on the skills tested on the BST	• For students who do not choose to enroll in other remediation opportunities, packets are available with practice tests and information on the skills tested on the BST

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